# PLAYS
# FOR GRADUATION DAYS

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

A. P. SANFORD

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PLAYS FOR GRADUATION DAYS

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*Selected by*

## A. P. SANFORD

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# PLAYS FOR GRADUATION DAYS

*Compiled and Edited by*
A. P. SANFORD

*With a Preface by*
PERCIVAL WILDE

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# PREFACE

There is no thinking man, I dare say, who has not at some time reflected how unreality touches many lives only at their beginnings and at their ends.

As children we come into a world cushioned with make-believes, upholstered with fairy tales, and peopled with the thousand and one happy inventions of Hans Christian Andersen and the brothers Grimm.

We learn that there is an unseen world where everything that is, is right: where the good little child, though eaten by a wolf, emerges unharmed from its stomach; where the wicked meet with dooms which the wisdom of generations of children has approved; where the Prince meets the Sleeping Beauty and lives with her happily ever after.

And then comes the reality of school-days:

"Why have you such big examples, Grandmother?"

"The better to keep your budget with."

"Why have you such very long words, Grandmother?"

"The better to understand invoices and bills of lading, the fine print in your insurance policy and the instructions that come with the patent potato masher."

"Why have you such uninteresting facts, Grandmother?"

"Because minerals of every sort occur in the mountains, and coal is abundant in east central parts."

Thus Red Riding Hood meets the wolf, and is devoured by it—and learns that Sindbad is a myth, and that Cinderella's glass slipper would be considered unsanitary, and that the Sleeping Beauty suffered from encephalitis lethargica (which cannot be harder to bear than it is to spell). Her illusions are gone, and cannot be gathered together again until later on—sometimes too much later on!—she

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is introduced to a delightful subject which is more than a subject—which is an escape from reality, and a magic in itself—and which passes under the name of the Drama.

Not the Drama as it used to be taught:

"Shakespeare?"

"1564-1616."

"Sheridan?"

"1751-1816."

"Ibsen?"

"1828-1906."

"Go to the head of the class."

Such is Fame! I wonder, sometimes, if men would have struggled for it had they dreamed that they would be epitomized by the dates on which they were born (unwillingly) and the dates on which they died (still more unwillingly)!

I would have Drama approached in another spirit. Of all the arts, it is the nearest to life. Of all the arts, it is the only one that heads its every page with the loveliest words of childhood, "Let's pretend."

It is an art which should not merely be set off to one side and studied. It is an art in which the most intimate participation is the best. Do you like an idea? Then learn from it how to express your own. Does a scene please you? Then let it open your eyes, so that you find other pleasing scenes about you. Do you care for a certain character? Then play it, so that you may better understand your fellow men. If you are a pauper you may have the joy of being a prince; and if you are a prince it will be good for you to play at being a pauper. Learn by entering into those make-believe lives—in which there is less make-believe, perhaps, than there is in your own—how souls very different from yours have found release, and while I do not say that you must copy them, I say that you must think about them, because from them you, too, may discover your own paths to release and happiness.

The blissful unrealities of your childhood lie behind you. You enter upon a life that cannot be without its harsh

moments. Forget square root (if you ever learned it); forget the difference between a preposition and a conjunction; forget the exact location of the deepest spot in the Pacific Ocean: but remember that the way to new blissful unrealities is through the door marked "Drama."

PERCIVAL WILDE.

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PLAYS FOR GRADUATION DAYS

# MISTER PUNCH *

## *A TRAGICAL COMEDY OR A COMICAL TRAGEDY FOR LIVING PUPPETS*

By

COLIN CLEMENTS

* This adaptation is from the performance of an Italian wayfaring puppet show-man by the name of Piccini who, long ago, traveled with his troupe up and down the countryside of England.

Copyright, 1929, by Colin Clements.

## CHARACTERS

PUNCH
TOBY, *the dog*
SCARAMOUCH
JUDY
THE BABY
POLLY
THE HOBBY HORSE
DOCTOR
SERVANT
A CONSTABLE
AN OFFICER
JACK KETCH
TWO MEN
THE DEVIL

## MISTER PUNCH *

Pop, who goes there?
It is Master Punch, my Lady.
Pop, who goes there?
It is Master Punch who goes.
Scarcely a beau,
He fears he may not please you,
But he would tease you
To see his little show.

Pop, who goes there?
It is Master Punch, my Lady.
Pop, who goes there?
It is Master Punch who goes.
Always so gay
He loves to dance divinely,
Balancing finely
In such a graceful way.

Pop, who goes there?
It is Master Punch, my Lady.
Pop, who goes there?
It is Master Punch who goes.
What is he after?
Oh, children, he makes bold,
Young folks and old,
To keep you young with laughter.

* This may be sung by someone before the play begins. Words and music are published in "Old Songs and Rounds," Charles M. Widor and Boutet de Monvel, by Duffield.

# MISTER PUNCH

*For this play the curtains are drawn but part way. The speeches of the actors are all spoken in falsetto and their actions are jerky, as though heads, arms and legs were being pulled by unseen strings. The costumes are fantastic and full of color.*

*After a few preliminary squeaks* MR. PUNCH'S *head appears between the curtains; he nods three times to the audience; once to center then to left and right.*

PUNCH.

Ladies and gen-tel-men, pray how do you do?
If you are all happy then I'm happy, too.
Stop and hear my merry little play;
If I make you laugh, I need not make you pay!

[*Quick as a flash his head disappears. He is heard singing. The song has no particular tune.*]

Mr. Punch is a jolly good fellow,
His dress is all scarlet and yellow,
And if now and then he gets mellow,
It's only among his good friends;
His money most freely he spends,
To laugh and grow fat he intends:
With the girls he's a rogue and a rover;
He lives, while he can, upon clover;
When he dies—it will be all over;
And there Punch's comedy ends.

[*The curtains part on a room in the house of* MR. PUNCH *and* MISTRESS JUDY. MR. PUNCH, *his high-cocked hat pulled nonchalantly down over his huge hooked nose, looks*

*for all the world like a parrot. He comes dancing into the room—stops suddenly and calls.*]

PUNCH [*through his nose*]. Judy, my dear! Judy! [TOBY, *a little rag dog, comes bounding into the room. He really walks along the edge of the flat which hides the feet of our actors from the audience.*]

TOBY. Bow, wow, wow!

PUNCH [*good naturedly*]. Well, how-do-you-do, my good friend, Toby? How-do-you-do! And how is your master, Mr. Scaramouch?

TOBY [*sits up on his hind legs*]. Bow, wow, wow!

PUNCH. I'm glad to hear it. What a nice, good-tempered dog you are. No wonder your master is fond of you. [*He puts out his hand to pet* TOBY'S *head.*]

TOBY [*wiggling his body from side to side*]. Arf! Arf!

PUNCH. What? Toby! Are you cross this morning? I know what's the matter! You got out of the bed wrong-way-upwards!

TOBY [*snarling savagely*]. Arr! A-r-r!

PUNCH. Poor Toby. Poor, poor Toby. [*He puts out his hand cautiously.*] Toby, you're a cross dog! [TOBY *snaps at his hand.*] Get away with you! Get out of my house! Go back to old Scaramouch!

TOBY. Bow, wow, wow! [*He jumps up and seizes poor* MR. PUNCH *by the nose.*]

PUNCH. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! L' go! My nose! My poor nose! My beautiful nose! Get away! Oh, dear! Judy! Judy!

TOBY. Gr-r-r! [*The distracted* MR. PUNCH *is unable to shake off* TOBY. *Suddenly the dog lets go and runs out.* MR. PUNCH *stands sorrowfully nursing his wounded nose.*]

PUNCH. Oh! Oh! My poor little nose! Judy, Judy! That naughty dog! [*He shakes his fist.*] I'll tell your master, Mr. Scaramouch! Mr. Scaramouch, oh, Mr. Scaramouch! Come right in here and see what your brute of a dog did to my nose. [MR. SCARAMOUCH *comes running into the room. He carries a large stick.*]

SCARAMOUCH. Punch, what have you been doing to my poor dog?

PUNCH [*hurrying to the far end of the room*]. My good friend, how-do-you-do?

SCARAMOUCH [*shaking his stick*]. Don't you "How-de-do" me. I know what's up. You've been beating and ill-using my poor dog, Toby, Mr. Punch.

PUNCH. He has been biting my poor . . . what have you got there?

SCARAMOUCH. Where?

PUNCH. There in your hand.

SCARAMOUCH [*looks down at the stick and laughs*]. This? Oh, can't you see? It's a . . . a fiddle.

PUNCH. A fiddle? What a pretty thing is a fiddle! Can you play upon that fiddle?

SCARAMOUCH. Come here and I'll try!

PUNCH [*trying to smile*]. No . . . no, thank you. I can hear very well from here, thank you.

SCARAMOUCH. Then you can play it for yourself. Do you know how to play a fiddle?

PUNCH [*moves closer to his friend*]. I don't know; I never tried. Let me see. [*He takes the stick from* MR. SCARAMOUCH.] Let me see. [*As if by accident he reaches out with the stick and hits* MR. SCARAMOUCH *lightly on his high cap.*]

SCARAMOUCH [*turning around suddenly*]. You play very well, Mr. Punch. [*He grabs the stick away from* MR. PUNCH.] I'll teach you *how* to play the fiddle! [*He dances around the room several times then suddenly hits poor* PUNCH *a hard blow on the back of the head.*]

PUNCH. I don't like your playing as well as my own! [*He grabs the stick, swings it over his head and strikes poor* SCARAMOUCH *so violently that he goes sailing from sight.*] How do you like my tune, my good friend? He! He! He! You'll never hear such another tune so long as you live, my boy. [*He throws away the stick and struts proudly*

*back and forth.*] Judy! Judy! My dear Judy! Can't you answer, my dear?

JUDY [*from within*]. Well! What do you want, Punch?

PUNCH. Come up stairs. I want *you.*

JUDY [*still from within*]. Then want must be your master. I'm busy.

PUNCH. Oh. [*He bends toward the audience, puts his hand to his mouth and sings in a low tone*]:

Her answer genteel is and civil!
No wonder, you think, if we live ill,
And I wish her sometimes to the Devil,
  Since that's all the answer I get;
  Yet, why should I grumble and fret,
  Because she's sometimes in a pet?

Though I really am sorry to say, Sirs,
That that is too often her way, Sirs;
For this, by and by, she shall pay, Sirs.
  Oh, wives are an obstinate set,
  Yes, wives are an obstinate set!

[MISTRESS JUDY *enters.* MR. PUNCH *stops his song suddenly.*]

JUDY [*her arms are folded and it is plain to see that she is in no good humor*]. Well, here I am, what do you want? What *do* you want?

PUNCH [*soothingly*]. What a pretty creature you are! What a beauty!

JUDY. What do you want, I say.

PUNCH. A kiss! A pretty kiss! [*He kisses* JUDY. *She boxes his ears.*]

JUDY. Take that! How do you like my kisses, eh? Will you have another?

PUNCH [*nursing the side of his face*]. No, one of your kisses is quite enough, my sweet wife. [*To the audience.*] She is always so playful. [*To* MISTRESS JUDY.] Where is our child? Fetch me the child, Judy, my dear, fetch me the child.

JUDY [*hurrying out*]. I'll fetch the dear.

PUNCH [*to the audience*]. There's a wife for you! Such a precious, darling, sweet-natured little dear. [*He is about to sing his song again when* MISTRESS JUDY *comes hurrying in with a baby in her arms.*]

JUDY. Here's the child. Pretty dear, it knows its papa. Take the child!

PUNCH [*taking the baby*]. Give it to me . . . the pretty little dear. How much it looks like its sweet little mama!

JUDY. Be careful!

PUNCH. What's the matter now, my love?

JUDY [*she grabs the baby*]. You're so awkward!

PUNCH [*grabbing the baby from his wife*]. Give it to me! I know how to hold it as well as you! [*He strikes at his wife who jumps aside.*] Get out! Get out, I say. [MISTRESS JUDY *hurries from the room.*] Pretty baby . . . pretty little baby. So sleepy, eh? [*He rocks the baby in his arms as he sings*]:

Oh, rest thee, my baby,
  Thy daddy is here:
Thy mammy's a gaby,
  An' that is quite clear.
Oh, rest thee, my darling,
  Thy mother will come,
With voice like a starling—
  I wish she were dumb.

[*He turns the baby around and looks into its chubby painted face for a moment in abject bewilderment.*] Poor, dear, little thing, it can't go to sleep. Well then, it shan't! [*Dancing the baby up and down in his arms.*]

Dance baby ditty;
What shall daddy to widdy?
  Sit on his lap,
  Give him some pap;
Dance baby ditty.

[*He sets the child against the wall, dances wildly and claps his hands.*] Catchee! Catchee! Catchee! [*The baby screams and* PUNCH *takes it up in his arms again.*] What *is* the matter with it? I know! It has the stomachache. Hush-a-bye! Hush-a-bye. Judy, *Judy,* the child has got the stomachache! Sh-h-h! Keep quiet, can't you? [*He boxes the baby's ears. More screams.*] Can't you stop that squalling! Oh, such a baby! Just like its mother! Get along with you. [*He tosses the baby over the front of the stage into the lap of some little girl in the audience and dances around the room in glee as he sings*]:

Go away, naughty baby;
There it goes over:
Thy mammy's a gaby,
Thy daddy's a rover.

[MISTRESS JUDY *comes hurrying into the room. She looks about.*]

JUDY. Where is the child?

PUNCH. Eh? Gone. . . . Yes; gone to sleep!

JUDY. But what have you done with it?

PUNCH. It's gone to sleep.

JUDY. What *have* you done with it?

PUNCH. What have I done with it?

JUDY. Yes; *done* with it?

PUNCH [*scratches his head*]. Oh, *done* with it?

JUDY. Yes; I heard it crying just now. Where is it?

PUNCH. Now how should I know?

JUDY. I heard you making the pretty darling cry.

PUNCH. Cry? I should say it did cry. . . . I can't stand a scolding wife or a crying baby so I threw it out of the window!

JUDY. Out of the window! You cruel wretch! [*She weeps into the corner of her white apron.*] Oh! Oh! You barbarous man! Oh!

PUNCH [*consolingly*]. Never mind, we shall get another one. One that cries less.

JUDY. You shall pay for this! [*Weeping bitterly she runs from the room.*]

PUNCH [*shaking his head from side to side*]. Now she's doing it! Wow! What an awful noise about nothing. [*Bobbing his head up and down he dances about the room.* MISTRESS JUDY *enters unseen by him with a large stick; she hits* PUNCH *a resounding blow on the head.*]

JUDY. I'll teach you to throw my child out of the window!

PUNCH [*yelling with pain*]. Oh! So-o-ftly, Judy, so-o-ftly!

JUDY [*hitting him again*]. You will throw my baby out of the window, will you?

PUNCH. I'll never do it again! I'll never do it again!

JUDY [*hitting him still once more*]. There's one to remember your promise with!

PUNCH [*rubbing his wounded head*]. A joke's a joke! My poor head! My poor head!

JUDY. You brute!

PUNCH. You're in earnest, are you?

JUDY [*flourishing her stick*]. Yes! [*Hit.*] I [*hit*] am. [*Hit.*]

PUNCH [*dodging her blow*]. Stop it, will you!

JUDY. No, I won't! [*She again swings at him, he jumps aside and she almost loses her balance.* MR. PUNCH *grabs the stick and goes chasing* MISTRESS JUDY *back and forth across the room.*]

PUNCH. Now it's my turn.

JUDY. Oh, pray, Mr. Punch, don't strike me.

PUNCH. Just one little lesson. [JUDY *trips and falls. Her head and arms hang over the edge of the stage.* PUNCH *gives her a spanking.*] Get up now, get up. [MISTRESS JUDY *does not move.*] Well, then, get down. [*With the end of his stick he pushes* MISTRESS JUDY *off the stage, then laughs with delight.*] He! he! he! To lose a wife is to get a rare fortune. [*He goes swaggering about the room with the stick thrown over one shoulder, singing*]:

Who'd be plagued with a wife
That could set himself free
With a rope or a knife,
Or a good stick like me?

[*A pretty little doll with yellow hair, blue eyes and red, red, lips enters the room.*]

PRETTY POLLY. Oh!

PUNCH. What a beautiful, beautiful lady you are! [MR. PUNCH *clasps his hands in admiration and makes funny little noises.* PRETTY POLL *begins to dance:* MR. PUNCH *looks on in silent delight. Then he begins to dance with her; backwards, forwards and sideways. Suddenly he catches the lady in his arms and kisses her most audibly. She doesn't seem to mind at all. As the curtains are drawn they go waltzing about the room.* MR. PUNCH *in his squeaky thin voice sings*]:

I love you so, I love you so,
I never will leave you; no, no, no:
If I had all the wives of wise King Sol,
I'd ditch them all for my Pretty Poll.

[CURTAIN]

## ACT II

*When the curtains again part* MR. PUNCH *is leaning against the back wall, sound asleep. The very walls vibrate with his snores. Suddenly he stretches his arms high over his head, yawns and opens his eyes.*

PUNCH. It's a very fine day. I'll go fetch my horse and ride to Pretty Poll's house. [*He goes out singing*]:

Of all the girls that are so smart,
There's none like pretty Polly:
She is the darling of my heart
She is so plump and jolly . . .

[*He re-enters immediately leading his horse, a square-headed little animal, with a stick for a body. The horse prances about in great shape.*] Wo! Ho! My fine fellow. Wo! Ho! Rosinante! Stand still until I get my foot in the stirrup. [*While* MR. PUNCH *is trying to mount him the hobby horse runs around the room.* MR. PUNCH *starts off after his steed and at last stops him by catching hold of his wisp of a straw mane. By lifting his leg with both hands over the animal's back* MR. PUNCH *mounts. Away goes the animal,* MR. PUNCH *holding on for dear life, around and around the room. Then smash!* MR. PUNCH *finds himself in a heap against the back wall and away goes his horse.*] Help! Help! I'm a dead man! Doctor! Doctor! Come and bring me to life! Doctor! Doctor! Doctor! [*A little fat man comes running into the room.*]

DOCTOR. Who called me?

PUNCH. Oh, dear! Oh, de-a-r-r.

DOCTOR. Bless me, who is this? My good friend, Mr. Punch? Have you had an accident or are you just taking a nap?

PUNCH. Oh, Doctor! Every bone in my body is broken to splinters! I've been killed!

DOCTOR [*bending over* MR. PUNCH]. No, no, Mr. Punch, not so bad as that, sir, oh, not so bad as that.

PUNCH. Maybe not killed, but speechless. Oh, Doctor, Doctor!

DOCTOR [*poking at* MR. PUNCH'S *body*]. Where does it hurt? Here?

PUNCH. No.

DOCTOR. Here?

PUNCH. No.

DOCTOR [*twisting* PUNCH'S *long nose*]. Here, then?

PUNCH. That's it! That's the spot! [*As the* DOCTOR *leans over him,* PUNCH *hits him in the eye.*]

DOCTOR [*running from the room*]. Oh, my eye! My eye!

PUNCH [*jumps up and dances about the room gleefully*].

He! he! he! Ha! ha! ha! [*While* MR. PUNCH *is dancing around the room the* DOCTOR *enters from the other side and hits* MR. PUNCH *several times on the head.*] Ho! Doctor, what are you up to now? Stop it! Stop it!

DOCTOR. Medicine, Mr. Punch. [*Again he hits* MR. PUNCH.] Medicine for your bruises.

PUNCH [*running to the far corner of the room*]. I don't like medicine! It gives me a headache.

DOCTOR [*he walks toward* MR. PUNCH]. That's because you do not take enough of it. The more you take the more good it will do you. [*He hits* MR. PUNCH *another resounding crack over the head.*]

PUNCH. So you doctors always say. Try it on yourself.

DOCTOR [*beating* MR. PUNCH *with renewed vigor*]. We never take our own medicine if we can help it. A little more, Mr. Punch, and you'll soon be well.

PUNCH [*yelping with pain*]. Enough! Enough! Oh, Doctor, I've had enough medicine.

DOCTOR [*again striking* MR. PUNCH]. Only one more dose!

PUNCH. Enough! I say! Enough! [*He closes with the* DOCTOR *and after a desperate effort succeeds in getting the stick away from him.*] Now, Doctor, it's your turn to take the medicine.

DOCTOR. Wait, Mr. Punch. I don't want any medicine.

PUNCH [*dancing up and down as he beats the* DOCTOR]. Oh, yes, you do! Yes, you do! It will do you good! This will soon cure you! Medicine! [*Hit.*] Medicine! [*Hit.*] Medicine! [*Hit.*]

DOCTOR. Oh! Oh! Oh! No more. One pill of your medicine is enough!

PUNCH. Doctors never like their own medicine. Another small dose . . . just one. How is your stomach? [MR. PUNCH *thrusts the end of his stick into the* DOCTOR'S *stomach and pushes him out of the room.*] Now, Doctor, you may cure yourself if you can! [*He dances about the stage singing*]:

Right toll-de-riddle-doll,
There's an end of him, by goll!
I'll dance and sing,
Like anything,
With music for my Pretty Poll.

[*He stoops down and picks up a large sheep-bell which he rings violently; he then runs to the middle of the room and, still shaking the bell, sings*]:

Mr. Punch is a very gay man,
He is the fellow for ladies winning, oh,
Let them do whatever they can
They never can stand—
His talking and grinning, oh!

[*A servant in immaculate livery with wide gold braid and bright brass buttons, enters.*]

SERVANT. Mr. Punch, Mr. Punch, my master says he does not like so much noise.

PUNCH [*turns and glares at the fellow*]. Your master says he does not like this noise? What noise?

SERVANT [*sticking out his head*]. Your noise.

PUNCH [*dreadfully angered*]. Do you call my *music* a noise?

SERVANT. My master does not like music, Mr. Punch.

PUNCH. He doesn't, eh? Well, I'll give him an earful! [*He runs about the room ringing the bell as loudly as he can.*]

SERVANT. Stop that noisy bell!

PUNCH [*he stops suddenly*]. What bell?

SERVANT [*he strikes the bell with his hand*]. *That* bell.

PUNCH. He! he! he! That's a joke. Do you call this a bell? Why, man, it's a flute.

SERVANT. I say it is a bell.

PUNCH. I say it is a flute—a flute—a flute! [*He strikes the servant over the head with the bell.*] Now what do you say it is?

SERVANT. Oh, oh, a . . . a flute, Mr. Punch, a flute.

PUNCH. A flute? I said it was a *fiddle.* Can't you see? [*He is about to strike the servant again.*]

SERVANT. Yes; a fiddle.

PUNCH. I say it is a drum.

SERVANT [*amiably*]. Yes . . . yes, Mr. Punch, a drum.

PUNCH. I say it is a trumpet!

SERVANT. Eh? A trumpet? Oh, yes . . . yes, a trumpet. But, Mr. Punch, bell, flute, fiddle, drum or trumpet, my master says he does not like music.

PUNCH [*shaking his head from side to side*]. Then bell, flute, fiddle, drum or trumpet, Mr. Punch says, with his compliments, with his *compliments,* that your master is a silly-pated noodle!

SERVANT [*dumfounded*]. Eh? What's that? But he will not have your noise.

PUNCH. He's a silly-pated noodle, I say, not to like my sweet music. Tell him I said so. Get out! [*He drives the* SERVANT *around the room striking him with the bell. The* SERVANT *at last sees his chance and flies from the room.* MR. PUNCH *rings the bell more loudly than ever as he dances around the room. The* SERVANT *re-enters from the other side with a long stick.*]

SERVANT. You scoundrel, rascal, thief, vagabond and blackguard!

PUNCH [*turning suddenly*]. What are you saying?

SERVANT [*striking at* MR. PUNCH *with his stick*]. I'll teach you how to ring a bell near a gentleman's house!

PUNCH. Two can play at your game. [*They fight. After a long and fierce struggle* MR. PUNCH *gains the victory and knocks his antagonist against the wall.*]

SERVANT. Oh, oh, oh . . . my head!

PUNCH [*now pounding the* SERVANT *with both hands*]. How do you like that . . . and that . . . and that? Do you like this music better than the other? This is my bell! [*Hit.*] This is my flute! [*Hit.*] This my fiddle! [*Hit.*]

This my drum! [*Hit.*] And this my trumpet! [*Hit.*] There! I've played a whole concert for you!

SERVANT. No more . . . no more, I'm a dead man!

PUNCH [*skeptically*]. Quite dead?

SERVANT. Yes; quite.

PUNCH. Then here you go! [*He pushes the* SERVANT *out of the room.*]

[CURTAIN]

## ACT III

MR. PUNCH *comes dancing into the room with a fiddle over his arm which he pretends to play as he sings:*

When I think of you, my jewel,
Wonder not my heart is sad:
You're so fair, and yet so cruel,
You're enough to drive me mad.

*The* CONSTABLE, *an ugly-looking fellow, comes running into the room.*

CONSTABLE. Leave off your singing, Mr. Punch, for I've come to make you sing on the wrong side of your mouth.

PUNCH. Why, who are you?

CONSTABLE [*a bit taken aback*]. Don't you know me?

PUNCH. No; and what is more, I don't want to know you.

CONSTABLE. Oh, but you must. I . . . *I* am the Constable.

PUNCH. Who sent for you?

CONSTABLE. I am sent for *you.*

PUNCH. Thank you, but I don't want a constable. Oh, no; I can settle my own business without a constable.

CONSTABLE. But the Constable wants you.

PUNCH. You don't say so! For what?

CONSTABLE. You knocked the head off Mr. Scaramouch's

shoulders—and now he has to be all glued up again before we can have another performance.

PUNCH. If you don't get out of here I'll do the same to you.

CONSTABLE. I've a warrant for your arrest. [*With a mighty push* MR. PUNCH *knocks the surprised* CONSTABLE *off his feet. Another officer, in a high cocked hat with a colored cockade, comes running into the room.*]

OFFICER. Stop your noise.

PUNCH. Shan't!

OFFICER. I'm an officer.

PUNCH. I didn't say you weren't.

OFFICER. You must come with me. You threw away your baby and drove away your wife.

PUNCH. They were mine to do with as I pleased.

OFFICER. Never mind, you're to come along with me. [MR. PUNCH *knocks down the officer and dances about the room.* JACK KETCH, *in a high fur hat, enters unseen.* MR. PUNCH *turns and bumps square into him.*]

PUNCH [*backing away*]. Oh, I . . . I . . . I beg your pardon. I'm very, very sorry.

JACK KETCH [*shaking a mighty fist in* MR. PUNCH'S *face*]. Aye, you'll be sorry enough before I'm done with you. Don't you know me?

PUNCH [*trying to conceal his fear*]. Oh, yes, I know you very well, sir. You're Jack Ketch, sir. And how is Mrs. Ketch?

JACK KETCH [*he moves closer to* MR. PUNCH]. Why did you beat the Doctor?

PUNCH. In self-defense . . . yes, in self-defense. Why he wanted to kill me!

JACK KETCH. How?

PUNCH. With his medicine.

JACK KETCH. Do you think I believe that? [*He lays his hand on* MR. PUNCH*'s shoulder.*] Come along to prison.

PUNCH. There! [*He turns suddenly and knocks down* JACK KETCH, *then runs to the front and laughs with de-*

*light. To the audience*] : They wanted to take me to prison. He! he! he! To prison! Ha! ha! ha! [JACK KETCH, *the* CONSTABLE *and the* OFFICER *rise up and close in upon* MR. PUNCH. *After a desperate struggle they drag him away.*]

CONSTABLE. Now we've got you! [*The curtain at the back of the room rises and there is poor* MR. PUNCH *behind prison bars; he stands there, sad, forlorn and with bitter tears in his eyes, rubbing his huge nose against the iron bars.*]

PUNCH [*wringing his hands in despair*]. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What will become of me now! Pretty Poll, shall I ever see you again? [*In a broken voice he half sings*] :

Punch, when parted from his dear,
Still must sing in doleful tune:
I wish I had those rascals here
I'd settle all their hashes soon!

[JACK KETCH *enters carrying a gibbet which he silently fixes in the center of the stage. As he goes out he turns to* MR. PUNCH.]

JACK KETCH [*pointing to the gibbet*]. See that?

PUNCH. Well now, isn't that a pretty thing? He must be a gardener. What a lovely tree he has planted just in front of my window. [*The* CONSTABLE *enters with a ladder which he sets up against the gibbet. As he goes out he turns to* MR. PUNCH.]

CONSTABLE [*pointing to the gibbet*]. See that?

PUNCH. Stop thief! Stop thief! There's a pretty rascal for you. He'll come back again when it is dark and climb the ladder to steal the fruit off of the beautiful tree! [*Two men enter carrying a black coffin which they set on a box under the gibbet. As they go out they turn toward* MR. PUNCH.]

FIRST MAN [*pointing to the coffin*]. See that?

SECOND MAN. Look at it closely.

PUNCH [*he scratches his head*]. Now what's that for?

Oh, I see! That's a large basket for the fruit to be put into. [JACK KETCH *comes in again. He looks up at* MR. PUNCH *and smiles.*]

JACK KETCH. Now, Mr. Punch, you may come out if you wish.

PUNCH [*shaking his head*]. No, thank you, I think I'll stay right in here where I am.

JACK KETCH. Won't you come out and have a good dinner?

PUNCH [*very politely*]. Thank you, Mr. Ketch, but I have no appetite for dinner.

JACK KETCH. Then how about a good supper?

PUNCH. Supper? Oh, I never eat suppers. They're not wholesome.

JACK KETCH [*stamping his foot*]. But you *must* come out! Come out and be hanged!

PUNCH. You would not be so cruel?

JACK KETCH. Then why were you so cruel?

PUNCH. That is no reason why you should be cruel, too.

JACK KETCH. Come out at once!

PUNCH. I won't. I don't want to be hung! I'll get my nice clothes all dirty.

JACK KETCH. You've got to come. [*He goes into the prison and drags* MR. PUNCH *to the front of the stage.*]

PUNCH. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Can't you let me be?

JACK KETCH. No; here put your neck through this loop.

PUNCH [*pointing to rope*]. Through there? What for? I don't know how! I've never been hung before.

JACK KETCH. It's very easy; just put your head through there.

PUNCH. Show me how and I'll do it at once.

JACK KETCH [*taking hold of the rope*]. Like this. [*He puts his head through the noose.*]

PUNCH. And pull it tight, so! [*With all his might he pulls the rope and so hangs* JACK KETCH. *Quickly he puts the body into the coffin. The two men enter, take down the gibbet, then place the coffin on top of it and go danc-*

*ing out with their gibbet, coffin and poor* JACK KETCH. MR. PUNCH *picks up a stick and dances about in great glee, singing*]:

Right foll de riddle loll,
I'm the boy to do 'em all.
Here's a stick
To thump Old Nick,
If he by chance upon me call.

[*The* DEVIL'S *head appears at the back.* PUNCH, *shaking with fright, runs away to a far corner.*] Oh! Oh! Oh! Talk of the devil and he pops up his horns!

THE DEVIL [*coming closer to the frightened* MR. PUNCH]. So, it's you, eh?

PUNCH [*shaking with fear*]. Good, kind Mr. Devil, I never did you any harm! There, don't come any nearer. I hope you and all of your family are well.

DEVIL. Bah!

PUNCH [*he bows*]. Eh? Yes. Thank you for your visit . . . good morning . . . I should be sorry to detain you for I know how very busy you are when you come up to earth.

DEVIL [*taking a step closer*]. Bah! [*He darts at* PUNCH, *who escapes, and aims a blow at his enemy; they fight. At last, badly beaten, the* DEVIL *runs away but comes back immediately with a long pitchfork.*]

PUNCH. Pray, Mr. Devil, let's be friends.

DEVIL. Bah. [*Again they fight, more fiercely than ever. At first* MR. PUNCH *gets by far the worst of it but soon the* DEVIL *begins to grow weary and* MR. PUNCH *succeeds in planting several telling blows. At last the* DEVIL, *worn out and exhausted, falls forward, his head and arms hanging over the edge of the stage.*]

PUNCH. Huzza! Huzza! The Devil's dead! [*He throws back his head and laughs merrily.*]

[CURTAIN]

# AT THE MILE-STONE *

*A GRADUATION PLAY*

By

JOSEPHINE THORP

* A royalty fee of $5.00 for each performance must be paid to the author, Miss Josephine Thorp, 23 Baldwin St., East Orange, N. J.

## CHARACTERS

(In the order of their appearance)

YESTERDAY
SPIRITS OF PROGRESS (*four or more dancers*)
TO-DAY
SPIRIT OF THE CLASS
FOUR YEARS, *her attendants*
SIX COMPANIONS
  MATHEMATICS
  SCIENCE
  LITERATURE
  LANGUAGES
  MUSIC
  ATHLETICS
TO-MORROW, *who goes with the Class to the next Mile-stone*

While the hopes and aspirations of each group of students who reach the "Mile-stone" of graduation are very similar the EVENTS of the four years of preparation necessarily differ with every class.

In order that each group using this play may be able to make it the play of *their* particular class, the class itself should write the "Histories" for the scrolls of the attendant Years. These should be short, taking not more than three minutes to read, and they need not be in verse. It should be kept in mind that the years bring the following results, brought out later in the play.

1st year—Lays a foundation with VISION.

2nd year—Raises a framework with COURAGE.

3rd year—Builds the "House of Life" with PERSEVERANCE.

4th year—Glimpses WISDOM in service.

If this is done the play will have that personal touch a Graduation Play should have, without the necessity of an amount of work for which many classes have insufficient time.

THE PLACE: A Mile-stone, on the Road of Life.

THE TIME: To-day.

THE SETTING: At the front of the stage, a little to the left, stands a Mile-stone on which are the numerals of the year in which the play is given. At the back of the stage is a terrace with a vine-covered balustrade, beyond which the sky is visible; a short flight of broad steps at the center leads from stage to terrace. At right and left corners at the back of the stage, are stone benches, on which the Spirits who have passed and the Spirits of Progress sit, when not in action. If given in-doors there should be steps from the stage to the floor, either at the front or side.

If given out of doors masses of shrubs should be at each end of the terrace to define the stage and conceal exits and entrances.

23005

# AT THE MILE-STONE

*Music begins and curtain opens, showing* YESTERDAY *wrapped in her gray cloak, standing beside the Mile-stone. If there is no curtain she enters during the music from the L., and as it ends speaks to the audience.*

YESTERDAY.

On all great high-ways there are Mile-stones set,
So that the traveler may clearly see,
How far upon his journey he has come,
And what direction leads toward his goal;
Beside this Mile-stone on the Road of Life,
I, who am YESTERDAY, wait one brief hour,
With friendly greeting, welcome warm to you,
Who keep this anniversary with us.

Beside me other spirits soon will stand,
But as you know that Spirit-Folk, alas,
Are quite invisible to mortal eyes,
Over you now I weave a magic spell,
That you may SEE these Spirits, who have walked
Unseen, beside you, through so many years.

[*There are a few bars of very soft music, then* YESTERDAY *continues speaking, making three circles toward the audience as she does so, one to the right, one to the left and one at the center.*]

By the power of circles three,
Thus I make your eyes to see
Spirits, whom you all will know,
Who have helped us live and grow
Into what we hope to be;
Thus I make your eyes to see!

[*The music grows louder and from both sides of the terrace come the* SPIRITS OF PROGRESS, *who come down the steps, circle about* YESTERDAY, *and as music ends, fall on their knees beside her, R. and L.*]

Spirits fair of PROGRESS, pray
To this Mile-stone call TO-DAY.

SPIRIT [*at Right calls*]. TO-DAY!

SPIRIT [*at Left calls*]. TO-DAY!

YESTERDAY [*calls*]. TO-DAY!

ALL CALL TOGETHER. TO-DAY!

[TO-DAY *appears at the top of the terrace.* SPIRITS OF PROGRESS *rise, meet her and bring her to the Mile-stone, they kneel as before at each side.*]

TO-DAY.

Spirits of Progress, bring me to your side,
What would you have of me, sister of mine?

YESTERDAY.

To-day, we called you, for the hour has come
When Yesterday must give the glass of Time,
Into *your* hands to carry for awhile;—
Until these sands run out it is TO-DAY.

[*She reverses the hour-glass and gives it to* TO-DAY *who who holds it before her in both hands. As* TO-DAY *speaks,* YESTERDAY *draws her hood over her head and steps slowly backward to R.*]

TO-DAY [*to audience*].

The only day that is your very own;
For Yesterday is now a memory,
To-morrow but a vision:—I am yours,
Ready to help you make your Dreams come true.

[SPIRITS OF PROGRESS *and* YESTERDAY, *speak softly together*]:

Ready to help you make your dreams come true.

[*Smiling*]: This is the happy anniversary,
Of an eventful time, when in this world,
(Not very long ago) a DREAM was born,

Which now means much to every one of us.
And, lest you doubt that Dreams are living things,
I'll call this Dream, who now is fully grown,
To stand beside me at the Mile-stone here;—
Let each one welcome her with loving heart,
When she appears in answer to my call.*
[*Calls*] : Come, Spirit of the Class of 'Thirty, come!
[*Music begins a majestic march, and through the audience comes the* SPIRIT OF THE CLASS, *carrying a garland and followed by four attendants with scrolls. All mount the steps and stand beside the Mile-stone, the* CLASS *beside* TO-DAY, *her attendants behind her.*]

TO-DAY [*to* CLASS].
These friends who love you well have gathered here,
To wish you "Happy Birthday," spirit fair.

CLASS [*to audience*].
I bring to you, whose love has made me live,
A garland, gathered through the happy years,
To hang upon the Mile-stone of To-day.
[CLASS *hangs the garland on the Mile-stone and turns to* TO-DAY.]

TO-DAY.
Beside the Mile-stone let us rest awhile,
And look together back into the past.

CLASS.
Upon the scrolls of my attending Years,
Is safely set the record of the past
Which each in turn will faithfully reveal:
Read now your scroll, Spirit of 'Twenty-seven.
[TO-DAY *and the* CLASS *sit at the foot of the Mile-stone and listen as the* YEAR *reads its chronicle, then bows to* TO-DAY.]

* If the Class is of boys use the word "he" in place of "she." If the year of the Class has three syllables (as thirty-one) omit the final "Come."

TO-DAY.
It is a worthy record we have heard,
For you have giv'n a VISION to this Class,
And laid a firm foundation for her life,
Where high ideals may safely live and grow.
Your work is ended: rest with Yesterday.
[*The* YEAR *bows and joins* YESTERDAY *as* TO-DAY *resumes her questions.*]

TO-DAY.
What next befell you? Was it good or ill?

CLASS [*smiling*].
That shall the Spirit of 'Twenty-eight reveal.
['TWENTY-EIGHT *comes forward, reads the events of her year, and bows.*]

TO-DAY.
A happy record; you have giv'n this Class
COURAGE to raise the frame-work of her life,
Turn obstacles to opportunities,
And understand the dignity of work;
Now rest with Yesterday; your task is done.
['TWENTY-EIGHT *joins* YESTERDAY *and* 'TWENTY-SEVEN. TO-DAY *speaks.*]

TO-DAY.
We would hear further of your journeying.

CLASS.
Come, 'Twenty-nine, and read your chronicle.
['TWENTY-NINE *reads the scroll she carries and bows.*]

TO-DAY.
A splendid record; you have carried on
With dignity and honour your great task,
And given PERSEVERANCE to this Class,
To build enduringly her "House of Life."
Your work is finished; with the others rest.
['TWENTY-NINE *joins* YESTERDAY *and the other* YEARS.]

TO-DAY.
Now we are drawing very near To-day,
With eager hearts we wait to hear the rest.

CLASS.

* Spirit of 'Thirty, come and read your scroll.
[SPIRIT OF 'THIRTY *reads her history and bows.*]
This record fittingly crowns all the rest,
For you have helped this Class give life and form
To dreams of service and of brotherhood,
And, beyond Learning, shown her WISDOM'S face:—
Beside your sisters rest with Yesterday.
[SPIRIT OF 'THIRTY *joins the other* YEARS *beside* YESTERDAY.]

TO-DAY.

The Years who brought you safely here, dear Class,
Leave in your hands a precious heritage
Of lofty VISION, and of COURAGE high,
Strong PERSEVERANCE, WISDOM wide and deep.
And now the time has come to say "Good-bye"
To these fair years, and, with their precious gifts,
Toward another MILE-STONE turn your face.

CLASS.

The unknown path before my feet is dim
And filled with shadows; must I go alone?

TO-DAY [*smiling*].

You need not be afraid to say farewell,
For you but SEEM to leave the past behind:
It lives forever, safe within your heart,
And helps to mould your future day by day.
As you came toward this Mile-stone through the years,
There walked with you, unseen—but not unknown—
Friendly Companions, who will gladly go,
If you desire them, forward by your side.

CLASS.

Who are these friends, willing to go with me?

TO-DAY.

You have not always felt that they WERE friends,
But at this Mile-stone one sees with clear eyes,
And you can know them as they really are.

* If a two-syllable word is used omit "and."

[*Calls*]: Science and Mathematics, come to us!

[*As the two* SPIRITS *come forward from R. and L.* CLASS *starts.*]

MATHEMATICS.

Do not start back! 'Tis true that I am hard,
But conquering my problems gives your mind
Strength and endurance; may I go with you?

SCIENCE.

Science, like Mathematics, first seems hard,
But through my door come miracles of life
To give you new horizons. May *I* go?

CLASS.

A mind that's strong, a vision broad of life,
I need upon this journey; come with me. [*Holds out her hands.*]
Are there still other friends willing to go?

TO-DAY.

There are two others, gentler than the first,
Who would be very helpful, so I'll call
Literature and Languages to us.

[LITERATURE *and* LANGUAGES *come from R. and L. as* TO-DAY *calls.*]

LITERATURE.

I bring the fine deeds and immortal thoughts
Of your great fellow-men through by-gone years
To be an inspiration for your work.

LANGUAGES.

And I can help you so to understand
Your neighbour of a different race and speech.
He is no more a stranger, but a friend.

CLASS.

The light of other lives to show my way,
And power to make my neighbours into friends!
I need you truly; pray you, come with me.

[*The* CLASS *holds out her hands to* LITERATURE *and* LANGUAGES *who join her, standing beside* MATHEMATICS *and* SCIENCE.]

TO-DAY.

Two other friends draw near; one will enrich
Your soul, the other make your body strong.
Come, Music and Athletics, to this Class.
[MUSIC *and* ATHLETICS *enter from R. and L.*]

MUSIC.

When sorrow comes Music will comfort you,
Bring rest when you are weary, banish care,
Magnify joy, and on its mighty wings,
Lift up your soul into the Infinite.
May I go with you?

ATHLETICS.

You will need me too.
For I can make your body strong and fine,
A worthy temple where your soul can grow,
As you go forward on the road of life.

CLASS.

To have a happy Soul, housed fittingly
In a strong Body, is a wondrous thing:—
Dear friends, I pray you both to come with me.

TO-DAY.

With all these friendly spirits gathered close,
Take courage from your happy memories,
For now the time has come to leave To-day.

CLASS.

Within my heart those Dreams my Years have given
Are safe; before my eyes are high ideals,
And with these faithful friends I'm ready now,
To start upon the journey we must take.

TO-DAY.

I can not go with you upon that road,
For when I lift the hour-glass of Time,
Another spirit comes to take my place,
And with its shining vision, bright and fair,
Will walk to the next Mile-stone by your side:—
To-day is ending;—but TO-MORROW dawns!
[TO-DAY *lifts the hour-glass in both hands. As she does*

*so, the* SIX COMPANIONS *draw back to L. opposite* YESTERDAY, *and behind the scene a bell chimes three times. At the last stroke a beautiful little child, in pale rose colour, carrying an iridescent ball in both hands, appears on the terrace where she stands smiling. All the* SPIRITS *reach out their arms toward her and call softly.*]

SPIRITS.

TO-MORROW! TO-MORROW!

TO-DAY.

Spirits of Progress, bring To-morrow in.

[SPIRITS OF PROGRESS *bring* TO-MORROW *to* TO-DAY, *then draw back, two on each side.* TO-DAY *speaks earnestly to the* CLASS.]

TO-DAY.

Spirit, who are yourself a DREAM come true,
To-day is giving now into your care,
This fair To-morrow;—see you guard it well.
And keep it safe:—'Tis yours, to make or mar.

[TO-DAY *takes* TO-MORROW *to the* CLASS *and the child gives her its bright ball, then slips its hand into hers.* TO-DAY *reverses the hour-glass and gives it to the little* TO-MORROW; *then as the* CLASS *speaks, folds her cloak about her and steps slowly backward till she stands beside* YESTERDAY.]

CLASS.

Now tenderly we bid To-day farewell,
And with To-morrow's vision bright, go on
Toward another MILE-STONE with glad hearts;
Knowing each new To-morrow will reveal
Wider horizons than our eyes now see,
Bring us new visions, make new dreams come true,
And teach us that "The Best Is Yet To Be."

[*As the* CLASS *finishes speaking music begins a march, and the* SPIRITS OF PROGRESS *go up the steps where they kneel, two on each side, pointing onward. The* CLASS, *led by* TO-MORROW, *follows them, standing*

*in the center, her* COMPANIONS *gathering at the foot of the steps. About them the* YEARS *kneel in a semi-circle, and at R. and L.* YESTERDAY *and* TO-DAY *hold out their arms. The* CLASS *lifts her ball and the curtain falls.*]

## THE COSTUMES

YESTERDAY—Who is beginning to grow old wears a long sleeveless robe of dull old rose. Over this is a long gray cloak with a hood which is drawn over her head and almost conceals her face. Her girdle and sandals are silver.

TO-DAY—Beautiful and full-grown, wears a robe and head-band of deep rose colour, with arm-band, girdle and sandals of gold. From her shoulders hangs a gray cloak.

TO-MORROW—A radiant little child in pale rose-colour, who carries an iridescent ball in both hands.

THE CLASS—Either in graduation white with white ribbon head-band, or in cap and gown.

THE YEARS—Wear long, sleeveless robes of tan with girdles, head-bands and sandals of gold. Each carries a scroll from which they read the history of the year they represent.

THE COMPANIONS—Wear slips with uneven hem lines over which are sleeveless coats of a darker shade of the same colour. Head-bands and sandals of the darker shade.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| MATHEMATICS<br>SCIENCE | Old blue and a paler shade | Compasses<br>Microscope |
| LITERATURE<br>LANGUAGES | Purple and lavender | Book<br>Torch |
| MUSIC<br>ATHLETICS | Old gold and yellow | Lyre<br>Discus |

Each carries a golden symbol of their activities.

## THE MUSIC

The music is extremely important but need not be elaborate. There are three melodies: the opening of the curtain to which the Spirits of Progress also dance; the entrance of the Class; and the final march as the Class and Tomorrow start toward a new Mile-stone. All should have a strongly marked rhythm, and the last should be the most joyous. Any music which fits these limitations can be used.

# GRADUATION GIFTS *

## *A PLAY FOR THE GRADUATING EXERCISES OF A GRAMMAR SCHOOL*

By

MARGARET PARSONS

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## CAST AND PROPERTIES

The number of children in some of the episodes depends on the size of the class and of the stage. Every member of the class should have a part in the play. Many of the parts may be doubled.

| CAST | PROPERTIES |
|---|---|
| EVERETT, a member of the graduating class | Desk |
| | Chair |
| HIS MOTHER | School-books |
| EDUCATION | Watch |

### EPISODE ONE—GEOGRAPHY

| | |
|---|---|
| MIKI, a Japanese girl | Vase of flowers |
| THREE OR FOUR OTHER JAPANESE, probably girls | Jar of water |
| | Stone urn |
| | Gong (offstage) |
| | Towel |
| | Wooden dipper |
| | Straw mats |
| | Bowl |
| | Tea-dipper |
| | Piece of cotton cloth |
| | Slender spoon |
| | Kettle |

### EPISODE TWO—ARITHMETIC

| | |
|---|---|
| MR. THOMAS | Desk |
| JIMMY | Chair |
| | Papers |
| | Pen and ink |
| | Dustpan and brush |

EPISODE THREE—LITERATURE

| CAST | PROPERTIES |
| --- | --- |
| Jim Hawkins | Barrel |
| Long John Silver (with crutch) | Parrot |
| Tom Morgan | Torch |
| Dick | Knives |
| One or Two Other Pirates, if desired | |

EPISODE FOUR—PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Group of Boys or Girls or Both

EPISODE FIVE—MANUAL TRAINING

| | |
| --- | --- |
| Steve | Shelf to work on |
| Helen | Carpenter tools |
| | Tumbler of jelly |
| | Box or stool |

EPISODE SIX—HISTORY

| | |
| --- | --- |
| Captain John Smith | Couch |
| Powhatan | Tomahawk |
| The Queen | Bows and arrows |
| Pocahontas | Weaving and other work |
| Indian Braves, girls and women | |

EPISODE SEVEN—WRITING AND SPELLING

| | |
| --- | --- |
| Ruth | Two chairs |
| Emily | Some letters |

EPISODE EIGHT—MUSIC

A Chorus of Boys and Girls
Soloists, if desired

## NOTES ON PRODUCTION

There are several ways in which the stage may be set for this play. The best way would be to have a large frame made, about ten feet long and six feet high. Tack coarse mosquito netting over it and set it in the center of the stage, leaving room in front for the scenes in which the boy, EVERETT, appears. There should be a curtain to draw over the frame. Then build up from the frame to the walls on both sides with screens or curtains.

This setting may be simplified in many ways. If only one curtain is available, use that over the frame, and have EVERETT and his MOTHER walk on the stage, talking. If you can not have a frame, the play may be given without it, the curtains being drawn open to a width of ten feet for each episode. The slight expense of frame and cheesecloth, however, will be well repaid in the increased effectiveness of the episodes.

Much of the success of this play lies in keeping the action moving rapidly, and not having pauses between the episodes. The conversation between EVERETT and EDUCATION each time should allow for such slight changes as are necessary in the scenery, provided someone stands ready to shift it. Each time, plan to have the actors in one episode go off from one side, while those in the next are entering from the other. The episodes may be practiced separately, but you should have at least three general rehearsals so that you may go smoothly from one to another.

# GRADUATION GIFTS

*As the front curtain rises,* EVERETT *is discovered sitting at his desk, at the right, admiring his new watch. There are some books on his desk. His* MOTHER *stands near him, looking over his shoulder at it. If there is no front curtain, they come in together, talking.*

EVERETT. It was mighty good of Grandpa to give me such a fine watch for a graduation present, wasn't it, Mother?

MOTHER. Yes, indeed. He was proud of you for making such a good record this year.

EVERETT. Well, I didn't expect any presents. Going to school brings *some* rewards, doesn't it?

MOTHER. The best presents you receive come from Education itself.

EVERETT. From Education? How can that be?

MOTHER. Didn't it ever occur to you that Education has gifts to make to you?

EVERETT. I don't know as I understand just what you mean.

MOTHER [*going to door*]. Well, you think about it, and you will see. [*Exit* MOTHER.]

EVERETT. Gifts of Education! Now what does she mean? [*He picks up one book after another, reading the names very slowly as he does so, and laying each down again. He is thoughtful and deliberate—does not hurry at all.*] History—geography—spelling—ugh! [*Makes a face.*] Music—um-hum!—well, perhaps—arithmetic— [*Enter* EDUCATION, *a girl dressed in cap and gown.*]

EDUCATION. Do you see how arithmetic is a gift to you?

EVERETT [*his mind still on his thoughts*]. Not exactly;

though I'm trying to puzzle it out. [*Turning and looking at her with surprise.*] But who are you?

EDUCATION. I am Education, herself. I felt you were thinking about me, so I have come to help you solve the puzzle.

EVERETT. I am sure that you can help solve it, if anyone can, for my mother says you have given me some graduation presents.

EDUCATION. Yes, indeed. Many of my gifts you will have and enjoy all your life, long after your new watch is worn out. Isn't that true?

EVERETT [*doubtfully*]. Perhaps.

EDUCATION. You're rather doubtful about it. Wait and I'll show you.

ONE

*Curtain is drawn behind screen. On the floor are a jar of water, tea jar and a vase of flowers. At one side is a stone urn, with basin beside it. The flowers are arranged in Japanese fashion, only a few in the vase.*

*A gong sounds.* MIKI, *a Japanese girl in kimono, enters, followed by three or four* GUESTS. *All wear kimonos. As the* GUESTS *come in* MIKI *pours water from the urn with a little wooden dipper over their hands, the water falling into the basin, and offers them a towel on which they dry their hands.* GUESTS *then sit on straw mats in semi-circle. One mat is the tea-mat.*

MIKI *goes off, and returns on her knees bearing the following objects which she sets on floor near tea-mat—bowl, bamboo dipper, tea-stirrer, piece of cotton cloth, slender bamboo spoon, kettle. She makes as many trips as necessary to get them in and places them near the tea-mat, which is center front.*

*She rises without touching her hands to the floor, walks to one side, turns squarely around, comes back to tea-mat, pauses and looks ahead in an absent-minded way, then kneels and reverently deposits the objects on the mat.*

*She then dips water out of kettle, pours it into the tea-bowl, and by a rotary movement of tea-stirrer and a circular movement round the bowl at the same time, the bowl and the stirrer are both washed. She wipes bowl with a piece of white cotton cloth. She then dips three spoonfuls of tea with her slender spoon from the tea-jar and puts them into the bowl. She adds the water and stirs briskly. Every movement is made with extreme formality and amid silence. Others watch her attentively. On her knees she goes to* ONE OF THE GUESTS, *and with a profound bow presents her the bowl.* GUEST *takes a swallow, then wipes the edge of the bowl, where her lips have touched, with her finger, turns the bowl in such a way that, when it is passed to the next one, her mouth will strike a clean place on the rim. It is passed to* MIKI *last, and she drinks. Then she wipes the bowl in such a way as to leave a pointed oval area in the bottom. The bowl is then passed from one to another, and as they are looking at it with admiration, the curtain is drawn.*

*This tea-drinking ceremony is adapted from the description in* Japan Day by Day, *by Edward S. Morse. It will probably be impossible to have every detail accurate, but the general effect can be given. It should be serious and formal throughout.*

EDUCATION [*as curtain is drawn*]. I suppose you have no idea who they are or why they serve tea that way, dressed in those odd clothes.

EVERETT [*indignantly*]. Of course I know. We had all about them in geography. They're Japanese. There are lots of strange things in Japan. Some day, perhaps I'll go there.

EDUCATION. Ah, you have interests beyond this town where you live, have you? You have heard of people in other lands, and like to read about them. Perhaps you would even like to visit them.

EVERETT. Of course I would.

EDUCATION. But that is one of Education's gifts to you —the broader interest in people living in other parts of the world which comes from the study of geography.

EVERETT. I never thought of it that way, but I guess you're right. There are some subjects that don't broaden your interests, though; like arithmetic.

EDUCATION. My gifts are not all the same. Some have what we call cultural value, and some can be put to more practical uses. Look!

## TWO

*Curtain opens and discloses a man sitting at a desk writing. A small boy is sweeping up some scraps with dustpan and brush.*

MAN. Here, Jimmy, take these papers up to Mr. Jones in the Slater building. I want him to have them before five. [*Goes on writing.*]

JIMMY [*who has finished brushing up scraps, has dustpan and brush in one hand and takes papers in the other*]. Yes, sir. [*He starts for door, then stops and turns.*] Say, Mr. Thomas.

MR. THOMAS. Yes, Jimmy. [JIMMY *hesitates.* MR. THOMAS *stops writing and looks up kindly.*] Got something on your mind, Jimmy? What is it?

JIMMY. I've got to go to continuation school for two hours a week, beginning next week, unless I can get out of it. Couldn't you write some kind of an excuse for me?

MR. THOMAS. What do you want an excuse for, Jimmy? I'm willing for you to go. You ought to get every bit of education you can.

JIMMY. Aw, what's the use of education, anyhow?

MR. THOMAS. Lots of use, Jimmy. I had to leave school and go to work when I was a boy, too. But what little schooling I had has helped me more than I can tell. I used

to be a grocery store boy. Started by sweeping out the store every morning and running errands.

JIMMY [*amazed*]. Say, did you ever sweep floors, Mr. Thomas? Honest?

MR. THOMAS. Yes, indeed.

JIMMY. But how did you ever come to be manager?

MR. THOMAS. It wasn't by one leap, Jimmy. I climbed the ladder step by step. My best subject in school was arithmetic. I always was good at figures. It wasn't a very big store in those days, and I used to help the girl at the desk add up columns of figures sometimes. So when she left to be married, she spoke a good word for me and I got her job.

JIMMY. Gee! That was fine!

MR. THOMAS. But I didn't want to stop there. So I went to night school, and studied to be an accountant. After that, I kept climbing. But arithmetic gave me my start, and if I had never been to school, I shouldn't have known even that much.

JIMMY. Well, maybe schooling isn't so useless after all.

MR. THOMAS. Maybe not. Now run along with those papers. You go to continuation school, Jimmy, and work as hard as you can. You're not going to be an office boy all your life, you know.

JIMMY. Of course, I'm not. You're mighty good to me, Mr. Thomas.

MR. THOMAS. I like to give boys a helping hand now and then; but the lion's share of the work falls to them.

JIMMY [*with determination*]. I'll do my part, school and all. You'll see. [*Turns to go.*]

MR. THOMAS. That's the spirit, Jimmy. [*Exit* JIMMY. MR. THOMAS *takes up pen and writes.*]

[CURTAIN]

EVERETT. Well, arithmetic helped Mr. Thomas all right, didn't it?

EDUCATION. I should think so. Could you imagine a successful business man who couldn't add and divide and reckon interest?

EVERETT. Hardly.

EDUCATION. But business doesn't make up all of life. One of the great joys open to the educated person is the opportunity of escaping from everyday things into the realm of romance and adventure.

EVERETT. And you give that?

EDUCATION. Yes, for I give you the key to the world's literature. [*Curtain opens.*] But see—who is here? It looks like the block-house on Treasure Island.

## THREE

*The drawn curtain discloses* JOHN SILVER, *with his crutch,* TOM MORGAN, DICK, *and, if desired,* ONE OR TWO OTHER PIRATES, *asleep on the floor, all snoring. Have plenty of color in their pirates' costumes. On one side is the parrot. Either a live parrot or a stuffed one may be used. The light is dim. Cautiously* JIM HAWKINS *creeps in, his hands extended as if to feel the way. He looks about him. Then comes the cry of the parrot, which someone just behind the curtain makes: "Pieces of Eight! Pieces of Eight! Pieces of Eight! Pieces of Eight! Pieces of Eight! Pieces of Eight!"* JOHN SILVER *awakes and calls: "Who goes?"* JIM *sees that the men are not his friends, but his enemies, and runs for the door, but* DICK *has jumped up and catches the boy in his arms.*

SILVER. Bring a torch, Dick. [DICK *steps out and returns with a lighted torch. Stage lights up.* SILVER, *taking torch and peering into* JIM'S *face.*] So, here's Jim Hawkins, shiver my timbers! Dropped in, like, eh? Well, come, I take that friendly. Come, gentlemen, bring yourselves to!—you needn't stand up for Mr. Hawkins; *he'll*

excuse you, you may lay to that. And so, Jim, here you are, and quite a pleasant surprise for poor old John. I see you were smart when first I set my eyes on you, but this here gets away from me clean, it do. You can't go back to your own lot, for they won't have you; and without you start a third ship's company all by yourself, which might be lonely, you'll have to jine with Cap'n Silver. If you like the service, well, you'll jine; and if you don't, Jim, why you're free to answer no—free and welcome, shipmate; and if fairer can be said by mortal seaman, shiver my sides!

JIM [*tremulously*]. Am I to answer, then?

SILVER. Lad, no one's a-pressing of you. Take your bearings. None of us won't hurry you, mate; time goes so pleasant in your company, you see.

JIM. Well, if I'm to choose, I declare I have a right to know what's what, and why you're here, and where my friends are.

DICK [*growling*]. Wot's wot? Ah, he'd be a lucky one as knowed that!

SILVER to DICK. You'll perhaps batten down your hatches till you're spoke to, my friend. [*To* JIM.] Yesterday morning, Mr. Hawkins, in the dog-watch, down came Doctor Livesey with a flag of truce. Says he: "Cap'n Silver, you're sold out. Ship's gone!" Well, we looked out and, by thunder! the old ship was gone. I never see a pack of fools look fishier; and you may lay to that, if I tells you that I looked the fishiest. "Well," says the doctor, "let's bargain." We bargained, him and I, and here we are; stores, brandy, block-house, the firewood you was thoughtful enough to cut, and in a manner of speaking, the whole blessed boat, from cross-trees to keelson. As for them, they've tramped. I don't know where's they are.

JIM. Is that all?

SILVER. Well, it's all you're to hear, my son.

JIM. And now am I to choose?

SILVER. And now you are to choose, and you may lay to that.

JIM [*bravely*]. Well, I am not such a fool but I know pretty well what I have to look for. Let the worst come to the worst, it's little I care. I've seen too many die since I fell in with you. But there's a thing or two I have to tell you, and the first is this: here you are, in a bad way; ship lost, treasure lost, men lost; your whole business gone to wreck; and if you want to know who did it—it was I!

DICK. You!

JIM. Yes. I was in the apple barrel the night we sighted land, and I heard you, John, and you, Dick Johnson, and Hands, who is now at the bottom of the sea, and told every word you said before the house was out. And as for the schooner, it was I who cut her cable, and it was I who killed the men you had aboard of her, and it was I who brought her where you'll never see her more, not one of you.

MORGAN. Shiver my timbers! Is that so?

JIM. Yes, it is, and the laugh's on my side; I've had the top of this business from the first; I no more fear you than I fear a fly. Kill me, if you please, or spare me. But one thing I'll say, and no more, if you spare me, bygones are bygones, and when you fellows are in court for piracy I'll save you all I can. It is for you to choose. Kill another and do yourselves no good, or spare me and keep a witness to save you from the gallows. [JIM, *who has worked up to a high pitch of excitement, now stops breathless. All stare at him, amazed.*]

MORGAN. I'll put one to that. It was him that knowed Black Dog.

SILVER. Well, and see here, by thunder! it was this same boy that faked the chart from Billy Bones. First and last we've split upon Jim Hawkins!

MORGAN [*springing towards him with drawn knife*]. Then, by thunder, here goes.

SILVER [*stopping him*]. Avast, there! Who are you,

Tom Morgan? Maybe you thought you were captain here, perhaps. By the powers, but I'll teach you better! Cross me and you'll go where many a good man's gone before you, first and last, these thirty years back—some to the yard-arm, shiver my sides! and some by the board, and all to feed the fishes. There's never a man looked me between the eyes and seen a good day a'terward, Tom Morgan, you may lay to that.

DICK. Tom's right.

ANOTHER PIRATE. I stood hazing long enough from one. I'll be hanged if I'll be hazed by you, John Silver.

SILVER [*who is sitting astride a barrel, leaning forward and roaring*]. Did any of you gentlemen want to have it out with *me?* Put a name on what you're at; you ain't dumb, I reckon. I'm ready. Take a cutlass, him that dares, and I'll see the color of his insides, crutch and all! [*Pause in which one looks at another, but none moves.*]

SILVER. That's your sort, is it? Well, you're a gay lot to look at, anyway. Not much to fight, you ain't. P'raps you can understand King George's English. I'm cap'n here by 'lection. I'm cap'n here because I'm the best man by a long sea-mile. You won't fight as gentlemen of fortune should; then by thunder you'll obey, and you may lay to it! I like that boy now; I never seen a better boy than that. He's more a man than any pair of rats of you in this here house, and what I say is this: Let me see him as'll lay a hand on him—that's what I say, and you may lay to it.

[CURTAIN]

EDUCATION. You've had your first taste of literature in boys' books like *Treasure Island,* but you scarcely realize how priceless is this gift I lay before you, the gift of reading and the world of books which it will open to you.

EVERETT. Yes, I can appreciate that, for there are so many books that I already want to read.

EDUCATION. But I am no longer restricted to book learn-

ing. In the schools of to-day I give you physical education, which means greater health.

[CURTAIN OPENS]

## FOUR

*A group of boys or girls or both march on behind the frame and do a drill of physical exercises.*

EDUCATION. No one needs to be told that health is a gift. But my gifts have more variety now than they used to have, for I bring you children the ability to work with your hands —in carpentry, cooking and sewing.

EVERETT. Yes, I've had two years of manual training.

EDUCATION. You've no idea how often it will be useful to you.

[CURTAIN IS DRAWN]

## FIVE

STEVE, *in overalls, is working on a shelf he is making. There is a box or stool at one side.* HELEN, *in house-dress and apron, enters, holding up a half-full tumbler of jelly.*

HELEN. Oh, Steve, just look what has happened! A mouse got into my jelly again, and here is another tumbler half gone. I don't know where to keep it but in the cellar, and I can't seem to help a mouse getting in there now and then.

STEVE. I don't blame them a bit. If I were a mouse and smelled anything so good as your jelly, I'd come nosing around myself.

HELEN. It's all very well to pay compliments, but what shall I do about it? [*Sits on bench or box.*]

STEVE. You don't need to do anything, Helen. I'm doing something.

HELEN. What is it?

STEVE. See what I'm making?

HELEN. Why, it's a shelf. What are those boards for?

STEVE. They are to nail to the beams. It is a hanging shelf, that no mouse on earth can get on to.

HELEN. That's just fine. Oh, I'm so glad you are a handy man around the house. Where did you ever learn to carpenter so well?

STEVE. Well, I started in our manual training class at school, where I learned to use tools. No matter where I have been living, nor what I have been doing, I've found it a very handy thing to know. Now, let's go try the shelf in the cellar.

HELEN. All right. [*As they start to go, the curtain is drawn.*]

EVERETT. My uncle gave me a kit of tools for Christmas.

EDUCATION. That's fine. I hope you develop into another handy man.

EVERETT. I'm going to try to. Look here, you haven't mentioned history yet? Is that a gift, too?

EDUCATION. One of the greatest, for only by knowing what has happened in the past can we fully understand the affairs of to-day. Just as geography is broadening by showing life in other countries, so does history increase our appreciation and understanding of present-day civilization by showing the background against which it stands.

[CURTAIN OPENS, DISCLOSING INDIAN SCENE]

## SIX

EVERETT. Oh, see the Indians!

EDUCATION. Yes, here we are back among the Indians in the first English colony settled in the United States.

EVERETT. That must be Virginia.

EDUCATION. Yes, and it is several years before the com-

ing of the *Mayflower*. It is the village of Powhatan, the big chief, father of Pocahontas. [*The* INDIANS, *who are both boys and girls, are dressed in blankets over khaki suits and Camp Fire costumes, with feathers in their hair, and beads, ornaments, etc.*]

The following description is taken from *Princess Pocahontas* by Mittie Owen McDavid: "The Powhatan was seated on a kind of rude couch or hurdle covered with mats and deerskins. He was clothed in the celebrated robe of raccoon skins, ornamented about the edge with the tails of these animals. Around his neck he wore a string of beads strung alternately with bits of pearl cut from the inside of the oyster shell. He was exceedingly tall and powerfully framed, and bore his seventy summers with a youthful vigor and strength wonderful to behold. His face was round, but seamed and furrowed; his eye keen and piercing; and the general expression of his face was both haughty and sad. Smith called him "sour-faced."

"Beside him and grouped behind him sat and reclined the women of the royal household, brilliantly arrayed in fringed skins, white shell beads, coral bracelets and plumes, their arms and shoulders stained red with puccoon. To the right and left of The Powhatan stood his bodyguard of fifty armed warriors, the tallest in the Powhatan tribes, who constantly attended him."

Pocahontas at this time was only twelve, but her dress a few years later is described as follows: "Her dress was a robe of doeskin lined with down from the breast of the wood pigeon, and she wore coral bracelets on wrists and ankles and a white plume in her hair, the badge of royal blood. She wore also soft tan moccasins beaded with coral and pearl; and on her arms and about her throat were fastened chains of pearl wampum; while bands of woven pearl and coral encircled the crown of her glossy black head and held her tossing feather in place."

*As this scene is largely in pantomime, be sure to make all the actions very clear and distinct. Use your hands in gesture and don't be afraid of over-acting. When the curtain is drawn, Powhatan is not there. The Indians are busy making arrows, or baskets or pottery.*

*There is a commotion off-stage and two braves enter, bringing between them Captain John Smith. This may either be done entirely in pantomime, or the Indians may grunt according to the manner of their language.*

EDUCATION. This is Captain John Smith, who was captured by the Indians.

EVERETT. Oh, yes, I read about him. He had no end of adventures. [*The* INDIANS *stand him in the center and go off at a little distance. They take their bows and are about to shoot him, when he holds up one hand to stop them and with the other pulls out of his pocket a compass. Their curiosity is so great that they lower their bows and go to him. They examine the compass while he shows them how it works.*]

EVERETT. What has he there?

EDUCATION. A compass. The savages think it is something magic and are afraid of him. [*The* INDIAN MEN *confer together, while the* GIRLS *gather around him, looking with interest at the compass. Then* POWHATAN *with great dignity walks on to the stage and goes to his couch. All bow low before him. They bring* SMITH *to him, showing him the compass. The two warriors,* SMITH *and* POWHATAN, *look at each other with defiance. Then* POWHATAN *makes a motion to one of the* INDIANS, *who goes off and returns with food, which* SMITH *eats. An* INDIAN WOMAN *approaches with water for him to wash his hands, which he does, and the* QUEEN *then holds towards him a bunch of soft feathers, on which he dries them. They all sit down and the conference begins. The curtain is quickly drawn as* EDUCATION *speaks.*]

EDUCATION. It is a long conference at which they decide what shall be his punishment.

EVERETT. What has he done?

EDUCATION. He has killed two Indian warriors, and the punishment for that is death.

EVERETT. I'd like to see what happens next.

EDUCATION. If you are sufficiently interested, perhaps History will show you. [*The curtain opens on the same scene.* POWHATAN *makes a gesture to* TWO WARRIORS, *who come forward, and bind* SMITH, *feet and hands, bear him to center front and stretch him on floor. Two others bring smooth round stones and place them under his head. Another with club in hand stands at his head. Suddenly* POCAHONTAS *jumps up from those watching and, running to the* KING, *falls on her knees before him, stretching out her hands in supplication. Again it may be all in pantomime, or the plea may be made in sounds imitating the Indian language. All watch* POWHATAN, *but his face does not soften. The* MAN WITH THE TOMAHAWK *raises it and is about to let it fall on* SMITH, *when* POCAHONTAS *runs to him, sinks beside him and takes his head in her lap. She lays her own head upon it and defies the* INDIAN BRAVE *to strike. This is too much for* POWHATAN, *who rises, takes a step forward, and holds up his hand in gesture to stop the execution. The* BRAVE *drops his tomahawk, others unbind his feet. As they are doing this, the curtain drops.*]

EVERETT. And Pocahontas saved his life.

EDUCATION. Nor was that the only time she saved the life of the white man. On several other occasions, the Indian princess came to their rescue. Once she saved them from starvation and once from death by massacre. The first settlement of the English in this country would probably not have survived without her.

EVERETT. I read somewhere that she afterwards married an English gentleman and went over the seas to England.

EDUCATION. Yes, indeed, and there she was fêted everywhere as a princess and honored greatly. She grew up to

be a very lovely woman. But just as they were preparing to sail back to America, she died.

EVERETT. What a pity!

EDUCATION. Yes, wasn't it! Some of her descendants are living to-day and are proud of their ancestor who was an Indian princess.

## SEVEN

*Curtain is opened, disclosing* EMILY, *a trained nurse, sitting in a war hospital, reading.*

EVERETT. But see, where are we now?

EDUCATION. Alas! There is a terrible war, and this trained nurse is far from home, serving near the battle-field. [*Enter second nurse,* RUTH. *She comes on rather wearily.*]

RUTH. Oh, I'm so tired! It seemed as though my time off duty would never come!

EMILY. Well, now you're here, if you're like me, you'll soon be willing to go back on duty again. At least, when one's as busy as we've been, one has no time to think.

RUTH. What's the matter? Are you homesick?

EMILY. Yes, I confess I am homesick. But that's not the worst.

RUTH [*sitting*]. What is it, Emily?

EMILY. I'll tell you, Ruth, I'm worried.

RUTH. Worried? About things at home?

EMILY. Yes. Mother was very poorly when I left. In fact, I felt I ought in a way to stay with her, and yet—what was there for me to do? The call came from headquarters and I had to obey. Heavens knows, I am needed here, with the wounded coming in daily by scores.

RUTH. Is there no one looking after her?

EMILY. Only my little sister; and she's in school all day. When I left, it was impossible to tell what would happen. She may be better, and she may be—

RUTH. Yes?

EMILY. She may not be living now. It is nearly a month since we sailed.

RUTH. You haven't heard from her?

EMILY. There has hardly been time, with the delay in delivering mail to the army.

RUTH. I don't wonder you are homesick and worried.

EMILY [*rising and looking around distractedly*]. If I only knew, if I only knew! [*Knock on the door, quickly.*] What was that? [*She takes step towards side, but* RUTH *is ahead of her.*]

RUTH [*talking off*]. Is that the mail? Oh, thank you so much for bringing it over. [*Comes back with letters, looking them over.*]

EMILY [*breathless*]. Is there one for me? Oh, Ruth—is there?

RUTH. Yes, here it is! [*She takes letter from pile and hands it to* EMILY.]

EMILY [*tearing it open rapidly*]. It's from home! From home! [*She reads a few words, while* RUTH *looks on, eagerly waiting to hear what the news is.*]

EMILY [*with great relief in her voice*]. She's better. [*Sinks into chair.*]

RUTH. Good! What a relief for you to hear!

EMILY. Listen! It's from my sister. She says: "After you left, mother was very sick for two days, and then suddenly took a turn for the better. She is improving rapidly, and the doctor says that all danger is past. He told me to write you that he is sure she will be up and about now in two or three weeks.

RUTH. Oh, I'm so glad! So glad!

EMILY [*holding letter to her*]. What a blessing a letter can be!

RUTH. I was thinking about it the other day. I was taking care of a poor soldier who could neither read nor write. He so longed to hear from his wife, and at last came a letter which the priest had written for her. It seemed as

though it must have been but cold comfort, but it was infinitely better than no letter at all.

EMILY. How my little sister used to fret about her writing and spelling lessons! She liked history and geography and did well in arithmetic, but writing and spelling were her bug-bears. I wonder if she realizes to-day that if she had not learned to write and spell, she could never have written me this letter and brought me this great relief and happiness.

RUTH. School children so seldom look ahead and see what their lessons may mean to them in the future, and how a written letter may bridge the gulf of thousands of miles.

[CURTAIN IS DRAWN]

EVERETT. I guess I'm like the little sister, for I do hate to learn my spelling words.

EDUCATION. They *are* hard, sometimes. But they are worth mastering.

EVERETT. I certainly understand now that I am rich in graduation gifts.

EDUCATION. There are many others, but I can show you only one more.

EVERETT. And what is that?

EDUCATION. A knowledge of music which includes the training in singing and the playing of instruments. Not only will you enjoy singing yourself, but concerts will bring you much more pleasure because you have learned the fundamentals of music.

## EIGHT

*The curtain is drawn, and a group of singers are disclosed. This episode may consist of only one or two songs, learned in school, or it may be elaborated into a small concert, with solo singers and instrumentalists. At the close, the curtain is drawn.*

EVERETT. How can I thank you, Education, for all the gifts you have showered upon me?

EDUCATION. You can show your appreciation by placing your confidence in me, and following me in the paths which lead to higher learning. [*She starts to walk across the stage.*]

EVERETT [*rising and following her*]. I follow you gladly.

EDUCATION [*turning and speaking over her shoulder*]. The paths will not always be smooth, for there are places where they will be rough and very steep. [*Goes off.*]

EVERETT. With you as leader, I will make my way safely and surely. [*Still following her, he goes off and the play ends.*]

# LIGHT TRIUMPHANT *

*A FESTIVAL PLAY*

By

GEORGIA STENGER

* Suited to indoor or outdoor performance. This play is included in this collection by courtesy of the author.

## CHARACTERS

*Principals:*

VENUS, *Queen of Love, Beauty, Light*
JUNO, *Queen of Olympus*
MERCURY, *messenger of the gods*
CUPID, *little god of Love*
PEACE
IRIS, *attendant of* VENUS
HEBE, *cup-bearer of* JUNO

*Solo Dancers:*

AURORA, *rosy-fingered Dawn*
HALCYON, *Queen of the Birds*
TITANIA, *Queen of the Fairies*
FLORA, *Queen of the Flowers*
PSYCHE, *Queen of Butterflies*

*Groups of Dancers:*

THE FOUR WINDS (4)
LOVES *in the train of* VENUS (3 to 5)
MAIDENS FAIR, *Graces attending* VENUS (3)
ARETHUSA *and the* DRYADS (5)
GALATEA *and the* WATER NYMPHS (5)
THE ROSY CHAIN (8)

ELVES (10)
BIRDS (5)
BUTTERFLIES
FAIRIES (5)
FLOWERS (7)
WARRIORS (6 or 8)
CYMBALISTS (4)
THE DAY HOURS AND NIGHT HOURS (12)

The Processions may be augmented by extras: PROSPERITY, AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, MANUFACTURE, INDUSTRY, EDUCATION, SORROW, GRIEF, WAVES, FAMINE, IGNORANCE, HUNGER.

## SCENARIO

(Based on Frazer, Gayley and other sources)

VENUS, symbolizing Love, Light, Growth, comes in early spring to open her court and to send messengers throughout the land proclaiming good-will, prosperity, abundance.

It is the spring-tide of New Life. All Nature waits: birds, all green things, people of the air. MERCURY is summoned, for he holds the talisman of power in his keeping. Rumors of strife, mutterings of discontent are abroad and health, security, fertility and happiness are in danger.

But MERCURY, keeper of the sacred symbol and friend to all, is also the patron of thieves. He has been bribed by JUNO. She gets possession of the talisman—she would prevent happiness. She hopes thus to strengthen her warfaction and get the advantage.

MERCURY, cornered by VENUS, confesses the bribe. Confusion reigns. Nature mourns. FLOWERS pine. WINDS moan. He is commanded to go in quest of the prized power. JUNO'S supremacy prostrates VENUS and GRIEF reigns in the Court of Love and Light.

MERCURY procures the talisman. Hastening to VENUS, he stops to play with CUPID. He barters the talisman for a silver arrow.

VENUS, weary of waiting, goes herself in quest. JUNO, outraged at the intrusion, declares War.

When a battle threatens, the Car of Love appears, supporting a great blossom. The flower opens, Love (CUPID) comes forth, holding the talisman in his hands.

PEACE, following the Car, joins hands of JUNO and VENUS.

## TO THE STAGE MANAGER

As this dance-play is adaptable to indoor as well as outdoor use, the following scene-sets are only suggestive.

### ACT ONE

Indoor: Bare stage foreground. Woodland back drop and side sets. At center rear, is white portico of a temple —very simple, raised on three steps. A curule chair on top one, R.

Outdoor: Flank this portico with shrubbery. Fences of chicken netting, filled with branches and sprays are easily made. Stage must fill gradually, from sides only.

### INTERLUDE

Indoor: May be performed in front of dropped curtain, or in One with woodland wings. If the latter, have green mound across rear, high enough for Loves to hide behind.

Outdoor: Played in front of *live* shrubbery that emerges, ranges in ranks and holds attention, while JUNO'S Court is arranged. This live shrubbery may be done by extras carrying green shields. While the Interlude passes, wheel the portico to L. for JUNO'S throne.

### ACT TWO

Indoor: Throne set L. It is the portico of VENUS draped with curtains. Scene may be set in greens, or curtains across central back drop, which are to part and let the Car of Love through.

Outdoor: Portico wheeled to L. Live shrubbery, or curtains hung between trees allows for dramatic entrance of

Car of Love. The Car may be a chariot, or only a platform on wheels, holding a be-flowered form in which CUPID is hidden.

Time for performance varies with frequency and length of dance-numbers. DO NOT LET them become monotonous. From one to two hours.

### STAGE PROPERTIES

There are many gradations between Attic simplicity and twentieth-century elaboration. So, with the few things needed for this play, there may be things very simple, or things very grand, according to opportunities and notions of what celestials ask.

### THE PORTICO

Meant only to accent the Arcadian setting, it is of one piece, on wheels, made up of two or three steps holding up a covered lintel over four pillars. It must be all white.

Straight, right-angled steps will do, but the half oval is more picturesque and beautiful. These can be made by the manual training class. The concern should be ample enough to give easy room for the groups to distribute themselves without crowding center stage, rear.

Bank ends of steps with potted plants, if indoor, bringing side scene up well. If outdoor, the useful chicken netting frames wound with greens, can be used in same fashion.

This portico is backed solid, as no exits or entrances are through it. It can be placed against division of the rear curtains to be used later for Act Two, and in Interlude, drawn unseen by audience, back between them.

The Car of Love, Act Two, is another affair left to conditions. It may be a chariot, or a dump cart on two wheels (Ziegfeld made excellent impression with a flowered dump cart and heroine), or a baby carriage. Decorate with tissue paper flowers. Wound wheels add size. A huge flower, like a tulip, made of six wired petals may hold Cupid. Or, if push cart be used, MERCURY can get into the handles, while Elves prance and dance alongside.

A rose for VENUS, a crown and scepter for JUNO, helmets and spears for the WARRIORS, cymbals for the girls, sum up the list of needed stage properties, except personal belongings.

A word as to the living shrubbery. This is no new thing, for three hundred years ago, "Great Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane Castle" to outwit Macbeth. It was a surprising feature of "The Miracle," played in New York and Europe. In this play, it can utilize the extras who need a part without speech or dance.

Have the actors wear brown woolen hose. The trees are made of chicken netting—4 feet—curved into cones, and fully covered with green,—branches, privet twigs or tissue paper. The heads go into these cones. Eye slits are easily found. They must be carried steadily, with heel and toe sidewise movement, in strict formation. Stack just enough. Stand very still. In the summer sunset outdoors, these trees are very effective.

## SCHEME: COSTUME AND COLORING

*Note:* Insist on the costumes conforming to classic models. Gayley's "Classic Myths" has illustrations from Greek vase and sculpture.

1. AURORA: rose and yellow chiffon, mingled.

2. THE FOUR WINDS: pale yellow, blue, green and lavender, with veils fastened to shoulder and wrist for waving effects.

3. GALATEA and the NYMPHS: deep greens and blues. White caps.

4. ARETHUSA and the DRYADS: shades of deep brown. Leaves in hair.

5. THE ROSE CHAIN: tints of pink. Green leaves for girdles and head bands. Garlands to carry.

6. VENUS: blonde, tall, beautiful, happy-faced. White, clinging robe. Fillet of leaves. Long-stemmed rose as scepter.

7. LOVES: young children in flesh, close-fitting suits. Wings at shoulder, fastened to neckband, like Kewpies.

8. CUPID: flesh close suit, with short skirt attached. Bow and quiver filled with silver-tipped arrows.

9. MAIDENS FAIR: light robes of mull, Grecian vase style. These Graces must group, sway, dance as a *unit.*

10. IRIS: very full short skirt, showered from belt with variety of ribbons.

11. MERCURY: pale gray kirtle of georgette, flecked with silver. Low crowned hat, set with white wings. Winged white sandals. (An agile stepper, tricky in motion, swift exit and entrance.)

12. ELVES: black tight-fitting one-piece suits, hooded. Could carry sparklets, or strings of tinsel while dancing, to catch the light and scintillate.

13. Halcyon and Birds: suits of overlapping vandyked bands. Birds may have separate colors: red, blue, brown, or varied. Short.

14. Titania and Fairies: short white skirts, very full, very sheer, sprinkled with cut tinsel or snow crystals.

15. Flora and Flowers: short dresses of rose, purples, yellows, blues. Catch up or garland with buds and leaves.

16. Psyche: pale tan and gold, waist of cloth of gold.

17. Butterflies: short black skirts, gorgeous wings, spotted and banded, centering at back, and caught to wrists.

18. Grief: very long and clinging drapery of a uniform gray. Head wrapped.

19. Juno: tall, commanding, regal figure. Dark hair and eyes. Dress is the classic white, copied from Lemnian Athena. (See Gayley.) Ornament of silver filigree crosses breast from waist to shoulder. Scepter of silver; a fillet for crown, plain.

20. The Twelve Hours: short, very full dresses of bright, shaded greens. The Hours of the Day have scarfs of delicate rose. The Hours of the Night have scarfs of black, bespangled. Dresses must be severely uniform in style and length.

21. The Cymbal Girls: black dresses, highly ornamented and adorned. No gipsy costume allowed. A tinsmith can supply the cymbals.

22. Warriors: in rude imitation of hide-clad men. Spears and helmets should be in readiness for quick change.

23. Hebe: classic, short skirt, with chiton of silver cloth. Skirt banded with purple border of Grecian pattern.

24. Peace: severely classic long clinging drapery of white georgette.

# LIGHT TRIUMPHANT

## PROLOGUE

(Of dancing only. No speaking.)

SCENE—*The Court of Love and Beauty. Music, Last twenty-four measures of Grieg's "Daybreak" from "Peer Gynt Suite." Curtain should rise during this. Discovers* AURORA *asleep center front. Enter from two or four points, the* WINDS. *Dance: Music, Sinding's "Voices of Spring." Waving motions with scarfs, gradually approaching* AURORA. AURORA *arouses.* WINDS *settle R. and L. and folding veils, slowly sink to earth.* AURORA *comes C. F. Dance: The Coming of the Dawn to the Court of Love and Beauty. Music, "Gentle Breeze," by Carl Bohm.* AURORA *retreats to steps of temple.* WINDS *do same, folding veils and grouping on steps.*

If indoor, curtain falls on this tableau. If outdoor, continue on into Act One, same setting.

## ACT ONE

SCENE—*Same as Prologue. Music, "Barcarolle," from Weber's "Oberon." Enter* WATER NYMPHS *led by* GALATEA, *R. Dance, processional rhythm, interspersed with any motions of curved nature,—advancing, retreating, stooping, using arms to indicate the wave's crest. When done, range informally R. Enter* DRYADS, *led by* ARETHUSA, *L. Music, "Chansonette," Op. 13, No. 3, by Kopylow. Dance, processional*

*rhythm, with whirls, waving, swaying, to indicate trees blown by wind, always returning to erect position. When done, the band ranges along L. stage. Enter* ROSE CHAIN, *R. Music, Chaminade: "Callirhoe Ballet." Drill (use garlands), form figures and designs, with interlacing. A colorful show, requiring little skill. Its function is to precede their queen. Enter* VENUS, *attended by* LOVES, MAIDENS FAIR, *following. Music, Mendelssohn: "Wedding March," the first eight bars by orchestra bugle.* ROSE CHAIN *form arch through which* VENUS *and train march, centering front at last.*

[TABLEAU]

*During these movements, groups about temple steps intertwine arms and are attentive. When* VENUS *speaks, these groups keep time to subdued music with gentle swaying and swinging. The* MAIDENS FAIR *pose without stiffness, changing occasionally. The* LOVES *have the freedom of the stage.*

VENUS.

Beloved heralds of a new springtime;
Thrilling promises of new sweetness, new music of life,
Dread winter's reign is o'er;
His wail we'll hear no more. . . .
  This once bare land shall turn to green,
  And glorious day send forth his beam
To call from Nature's vales and grove
In fellowship, the Court of Love.
[*Lifts hands, palm up, and stretches out arms, exhorting:*]
Bright spirits mine:—
Brooks that run laughing to the sea;
Clouds floating in misty undulation;
Birds amid the shelt'ring boughs above us;
Many-nested trees that shade us,
  Come! Here let us stay forever.

Let Elysian airs wrap soul and sense
In the rest and rapture of perpetual peace.
Come, Music! Come, Dance! To our Court of Joy!
Show forth our praise of love, peace and happiness.
[*She retires gradually as she speaks, until she stands C. on steps of temple.* MAIDENS FAIR *just below her.* WINDS *and* AURORA *on bottom step.* NYMPHS *and* DRYADS *R. and L.*]

[TABLEAU]

VENUS *sits R. All attendants take resting places, attentive. Symbolic pantomime, "The Quickening Spring." Music, Mendelssohn: "Spring Song." Danced by ten or twelve selected and flower-costumed girls. Movements, Part I, are from down, up (elemental). Movements, Part II, are from in, out (spiritual).*

*Part One, "The Awakening Power of Spring." Music, Measures 1-49, inclusive. Covering entrance, listening attitude, creative feeling of vigor, with lower limbs most active, and drawing en masse.*

*Part Two, "The Disseminating Gift of Spring." Music, Measures 50 to close. Toe work, up springing, separating the mass into singles, then hands clasped, entreaty to heaven, gratitude, consecration by linked arms and eyes up, staccato steps in retirement.*

VENUS [*looking about*].
And Iris—where is Iris, my many-colored sprite?
Whose kindly wings scatter refreshing showers
On field and glen, on trees and bursting flowers—
Whose end of fairy bow, without a sound,
Binds valleys green to hills around. . . .
Iris! Iris!
[*Enter* IRIS, *L. Bows low before* VENUS *then performs. Dance, "The Rainbow." Music, Bohm: "La Fontaine."* VENUS *rises at close, approaches her.*]

Go, heavenly bow, and find thy late companion,
Mercury,—that mischievous Quicksilver.
He should be here. His absence troubles me.
His tricks, while meant in play, no doubt, doth bring
Grief and anxiety to our Court these many times.
Go speed him, quick to the air. Go swift as light,
Swifter than arrow flight,—then back as quickly into sight!

[IRIS *touches hand of* VENUS *with lips, exits L. Attitude of watching by all, with very slight movement while soft music plays. Enter* IRIS *preceding* MERCURY *and attendant* ELVES. *Spot light on* MERCURY, *who performs a few somersaults or springs before beginning the special dance. Dance, "The Ballet of Light." Music, Massenet: "Aragonaise" from "Ballet du Cid." As* MERCURY *begins a lithe tap or syncopated step, the* ELVES *assist, with lit sparklets. When ballet is over,* ELVES *lose themselves behind the other dancers, to give effect of background.* MERCURY *comes to temple steps, where* VENUS *meets him. He kneels.* VENUS, *shaking finger.*]

Swift wings, I doubt thee;
Stay here—right near me
Where I can see and find thee.
Thy airy journeys now must cease—
You join us in our Feast of Peace.

[*Both work forward.*]

As Guardian of my treasures rare,
Give me the Girdle in your care.
The symbol of my right to Queen of All Things Beautiful.

[*During remainder of speech, an exulting one,* MERCURY *shows uneasiness. Bites fingers, looks about, frowns.*]

For, clasping my form only
Can the Golden Cestus work its charm,
Bestow its magic gifts and free from harm.

Only through it can Love build new life,
Weed out discord and bury strife.
Mercury, Mercury, sly Quicksilver, give me my Girdle!

MERCURY [*evading her extended hand*]. I . . . I . . . I . . . that is, I don't . . . I fear. . . .

VENUS. Fear? What is this? Fear in this Court where naught is heard but sweet words of trust; where naught is felt save faith; where the holy flame of confidence burns undimmed by fear or danger. There is no such word as FEAR heard in the realm of Love.

MERCURY. Dear Queen, say no more about it, or . . . or . . . I'll . . . I'll . . .

VENUS. Deliver it instantly.

MERCURY [*fumbling about his clothes*]. I thought . . . I was sure. . . . It is not here. It must be lost! [*He acts foolishly, looking at the groups.*]

VENUS [*indignantly*]. Go instantly and find it. [*Stamps foot and points off stage.*]

MERCURY [*whines*]. I—don't—know—where—to—go.

VENUS. Go to your overlord, Mars. He knows everything. He will guide.

MERCURY [*shakes head*]. Oh-h. I can't go near him. He's angry. I took his sword . . . that is, I borrowed it without asking.

VENUS. Then speed away to Mount Ætna where Vulcan forges. Cleave the air of smoke and fire and ask the great blacksmith himself. He may have wished to follow the pattern of my lovely Girdle for presents to propitiate the gods, and cause them to cease this war that desolates the happy earth. [*Brightly.*] Or may wish this emblem to soften the stony hearts of unearthly men.

MERCURY [*frightened*]. O Queen! do not send me there. He's on the watch for me . . . he thinks . . . I put fireworks in his forge, and . . .

VENUS. To Neptune, then, mischief maker. He, as father of the waves, will loose his golden-maned steeds and speed the Quest of the Golden Girdle. It is Venus, god-

dess of Beauty, whose kingdom is in danger of annihilation that asks this.

MERCURY. No! not to him, dear Queen. I mislaid his trident only once, and he's . . . he's watching for me, too.

VENUS [*angrily. The stage ensemble rises*]. Away! Away! Deceiver! Rogue! Little winged thief of the gods! Away! scour the ends of the earth. Descend, if need be, to dread Pluto's region and pluck it from the mouths of three-headed Cerberus. Part the clouds that fly in battalions before thee; demand even of Apollo my symbol of all that is good and fair. Front great Jove and ask. My Girdle, my treasure, whose loss earth must ever mourn, for men will conspire, and war will lay waste the sunny face of loving Nature. War! War! destructive War will threaten the very home of Love. Away! Away! [*She waves hand imperatively.* MERCURY *backs to exit, R. The frightened* ELVES *slink off after him.* VENUS, *drooping, ascends steps, seats herself. The* ROSE CHAIN *comes down stage, makes archway through which the* MAIDENS FAIR *pass and begin their dance. Dance, "The Ray of Cheer." Music, Bohm: "The Guitar." Serious and slow poses of the æsthetic dances.* ROSE CHAIN, *four on either side, forms two rings, facing out. They slowly revolve.* VENUS, *at first distrait, shows interest, is charmed.* IRIS, *alert, leaves group, runs L., listens. She attracts the attention of* VENUS. MAIDENS FAIR *dissolve and retreat. Pause. The sound of fifes heard.* VENUS *rises. Ensemble stands.* VENUS, *joyfully.*]

Earth sends her incense in the work of loving hands.
They come, laden with fruits of patient industry.
To the Temple of Athena, goddess of Wisdom,
Go praise and prayer from a grateful world that
Hopes for an eternal rest in the arts of Peace.

[*Enter* PROCESSION OF ARTS AND PEACE. *Women, men and children, two and two, with symbols of trade and the arts, pass from L. very slowly across stage in the following order:* INDUSTRY, *with hammer, trowel, etc.;* COMMERCE,

*with torch;* MANUFACTURE, *with apron, spindle, etc.;* AGRICULTURE, *scythe, sickle, baskets of fruit on head;* EDUCATION, *children with rolls of manuscript;* MAIDENS, *with lyre, vases, trays of the vintage, etc.;* PROSPERITY *brings up rear, with laden Horn of Plenty. As they pass out, R.,* VENUS *takes hand of* IRIS, *C.*]

VENUS.

Hope's blessed rainbow bids us never despair,
In effort and duty we'll banish harsh care.
There are yet happy birds a-flight;
There are yet fairies, nimble, light;
The air around is Psyche's own;
And stars of earth in every zone.
Come, harbingers of happiness, with song and dance,
Our hearts and souls and hours entrance!

[*Ensemble begins a light swaying. Bright yellow light. Music, Lincke: "Glow Worm."*]

VENUS.

See! the glorious sun throws his radiant beams upon us.
Our gloom gives way to hopes of bliss.

[*Invokes the* BIRDS.]

Come, birdlings! Come.
Come, Halcyon, with thy feathered clan.
Flitter, flutter with your wings,
Fill the grove until it sings.
Twitter, carol, make each tone
Worship love and love alone.

[*Waves hand for music to begin. Enter* HALCYON *and the* BIRDS, *R. and L. Music, Poldini: "Murmuring Brook." Dance, Characteristique.* VENUS *sits. Groups informally attentive. When dance is done,* BIRDS *retreat, eyes on* VENUS, *fluttering to ground, R. and L. This same procedure for the four dance groups.*]

VENUS [*rising and invoking* FAIRIES].

Come, fair Titania, thy comrades bring
To move in swift and dancing ring;

Wreathe their arms, their tresses twine.
Come, make us merry, fairies mine!
[*Waves for music to begin. Sits. Music, Mendelssohn: "Rondo Capriccioso." Enter* TITANIA *and the* FAIRIES. *Dance, Characteristique. Dancers retreat at close, grouping front of* BIRDS.]

VENUS [*rising and invoking* FLOWERS].
Come, flowers, come!
Flora, bring thy daisies white,
Timid violet, roses bright.
Wreathe thy beauties in a whirl,
Richest colors all a-twirl.
[*Enter* FLORA *and the* FLOWERS. *Dance, Characteristique. Music, Wachs: "Coquetry." Dancers retreat at close, mingling with* FAIRIES.]

VENUS [*rising and invoking* BUTTERFLIES].
Come, Psyche, bring phantoms of the air.
All will be gay with thee and thine to share.
Butterflies of gold and blue;
Misty moths of sober hue;
On the breast of summer breeze,
Leave your honey for our trees.
[*Music, Grieg: "Papillon." Dance, Characteristique. This is interrupted near close by entrance of* MERCURY, *L.* BUTTERFLIES *retreat in alarm from noise made by* ELVES *who follow with cracker-jacks or castanets. Ensemble alarmed.* VENUS *descends steps quickly.*]

MERCURY. Juno has the Golden Girdle!

VENUS [*stricken*]. Juno! dread Juno! My rival? Oh, envious, envious Juno! [*To* MERCURY.] How came she by it again? It is not hers! [MERCURY *does not answer, droops head.* VENUS *falls back towards temple.*] Alas! Alas! Sorrow takes up its abode in the Court of Love and Happiness. [*Spread hands, palms down.*] Flowers, droop! Fairies, hide! Winds, wail! Birds, mourn! The reign

of your Queen is in danger—it may be over. [*She sinks on steps. The different groups sink to ground characteristically.* MERCURY *stands L. head down. The stage darkens. Enter* GRIEF, *R., with very slow steps. Dance, Characteristique, at footlights. Æsthetic change of pose. Music, Grieg: "Erotik." Lights go out gradually until perfect darkness.*]

[CURTAIN]

## INTERLUDE

SCENE—*Woodland, if outdoor. Indoor, may be played in One, while scene is set back stage for* JUNO'S *Court. If outdoor,* GRIEF *may exit solemnly, the groups of* WINDS, WAVES, BIRDS, *etc., making a soft departure, drooping figures.* MERCURY *and* VENUS *then will be left together on stage.* MERCURY *kneels.*

VENUS. Mercury, messenger of the gods, trusted herald and merry companion, thou breakest my heart with thy carelessness. Haste thee to Juno's court and ask that the Girdle, my strength, my power, be returned to me straightway.

MERCURY. She is at war, fair Queen. War, War! is her cry. The world obeys. She will hear none of thy message.

VENUS. But she must,—she must. The blight now holding but a part of the earth under its curse, will spread throughout, will carry desolation to the ends of the world of mankind. Oh, haste, light-footed boy, haste to her, pray that she desist from hate and jealousy, that she will have mercy, that she will restore what is not hers, and through me allow earth once more to smile, and mankind enjoy the fruits of peace.

MERCURY. She is hard-headed, dear Queen. She will not rest until Jove scatters the forces of Troy she leads her hosts against. Queen Juno has just got to win.

VENUS. Alas, alas! that such things must be! Earth

fades, the heavens flash omens of dire distress. War threatens to fling a parricidal hand of ruin over all that is fair and beautiful. Waste will follow; want will follow. Mercury, thou *must* go.

MERCURY [*begs earnestly*]. Spare me, sweet Queen. Queen of mercy, spare me.

VENUS [*indignantly*]. *Yes.* Snatch, if need be, that Girdle that Juno wears of mine. But no! [*She pauses, looks up to heaven.*] No, No! My Girdle binds not the waist of Juno when she thinks of War. It must be lying apart,—its influence not felt. Go, quickly, Mercury. Fly there and back with greatest speed—it is not about her form. Quickly. Or I must go myself. Make thyself invisible—fly, fly. Find the treasure and bring it back to me.

MERCURY [*rising but hesitates*]. Spare, spare, O Queen.

VENUS. I have said. My kingdom will be rent to pieces, my empire of freedom bound in chains until I gird myself with it. Go quickly. If you do not [*very decidedly*] then I, I, must make my pilgrimage into the realm of darkness, hatred and unhappy anger. [VENUS *points outward with hand.* MERCURY *seizes it, kisses. Exeunt, R. and L.* MERCURY *looking back expectantly. Music, Heller: "Water Sprites," Op. 47. One by one, peeping from over mound of green at back, to the number of six or eight,* LOVES *tumble on stage. Leapfrog, hide and seek in the shrubbery and behind mound, makes a happy interlude of itself, all the while this selection is played. No speech. Enter* CUPID, *L. He lays down bow and quiver to enter the romp with the* LOVES. *Enter* MERCURY, *R. He carries the Girdle slung over one shoulder.*]

PANTOMIME

LOVES *stop play and gather around* MERCURY. *They finger the Girdle. He plays a few tricks with them. He takes off the Girdle to turn a somersault for them.* CUPID *sees Girdle. Picks it up, fastens about himself.* MERCURY

*stops playing at this sight, chases* CUPID *about stage. Catches him, takes Girdle from him forcibly. Cupid cries.* MERCURY *sorry.* CUPID *offers a silver arrow from his quiver for the Girdle. The exchange is made. All hands about in a merry ring. Music, Heller: "Tarentelle, E flat." Some leapfrog to behind the mound, the rest dance off, leaving* CUPID. *He takes off the Girdle, puts it on curiously, looks about, finds companions gone, picks up bow and arrows and exits, slowly.*

*Note:* If outdoor performance, all exeunt into the shrubbery.

## ACT TWO

SCENE—*If outdoor, a woodland scene, with addition of* JUNO'S *throne. This may be the temple steps moved to L. and curtains or drapery thrown over it, hiding partly the pillars, leaving steps exposed. At center back, two curtains hang suspended between trees or posts.* JUNO *discovered, seated on throne, crowned, and holding scepter. The* HOURS—*twelve—are grouped at ease on steps. Pause of a few seconds.* JUNO *waves scepter. The* HOURS *rise. Dance, ballet, "Hours of the Day." Music, "Dance of the Hours" from "La Gioconda" opera. Motions are æsthetic, rhythmic, posing by twos and fours, with waving scarfs, concluding with grouped pose of twelve, C. Enter* HEBE, *hurriedly. Music stops abruptly,* HOURS *disperse.* HEBE *bows to* JUNO.

JUNO. How goes the battle, dear Hebe?

HEBE. The battle rages, Queen of Heaven. The groans of the dying fill the air. Our friends are hard pressed. Jove urges on the strife to avenge the death of . . .

JUNO [*startled*]. Of whom?

HEBE. Alas! Splendor of the world, our beloved Patroclus is no more!

JUNO. Patroclus? Our brave Patroclus slain? Best of

all the best a sacrifice to Troy? We will avenge his death. War! [*Rises.*] We shall man more ships, gather more men, carry further desolation into that abominable city. We shall have a greater war. A greater war than ever before. Strike the cymbals! [CYMBAL GIRLS *come from shrubbery or wings. They clash instruments. Music, 32 bars, Rachmaninoff: Prelude, Op. 23, No. 5, sometimes called "March of the Cossacks." Enter* WARRIORS, *without helmets or spears. They file in, march and countermarch, then range across rear, waiting* JUNO'S *commands.*]

JUNO [*invocation*].

O divine Ether and swift-winged Hours,
Look at our distress. See what treatment your Protector,
Your Splendor, your Lady, endures
While her enemies triumph.
Behold how they band and ridicule us,—great celestials,—
Because we are powerless to withstand their thrusts
Of javelin and spear. Must our enemies conquer?
Must our heroes fall in battle and be forgotten?
Renew the struggle with renewing vengeance. Press on.
Let our side win!
[JUNO *addresses the* HOURS.]
Ye Hours, open the gates of cloud and bring
My golden-wheeled chariot hither. Juno will not yield!
Fire, dart flames into the ranks of our enemy and burn!
Flash, beacon-lights, from temple to temple of the hills!
Pray, people, pray, for victory, for power over
Even Jove's great might. The glory of your Queen is in danger!
War! [CYMBALS *crash.*] War! [CYMBALS.] To arms! To arms!
[*She walks about amid the ranks and groups.*]
Sharpen your spears! Light the fires!

Victory, victory over all our enemies!
[*Changes tone to deep-menacing voice.*]
War! War! bring tears to eyes of women and children
Who are not Greeks.
Bring woes to the nations that oppose us!
Carry bloody deeds into their towns and homes.
Let terror and darkness fill their days.
[*The* HOURS *kneel about* JUNO *in her vehemence.* HEBE *crouches L. of dais, weeping.* JUNO *takes throne again, raises scepter to* WARRIORS.]

Away! Away! Come not back until you bring victory. Steel your hearts; make sure your hands; give no quarter. Get ready for the ships, then let me see you. [WARRIORS *file out.* JUNO *sits musing. Leader of the* TWELVE HOURS *beckons. The* HOURS *prepare to dance. Music, second part "Dance of the Hours" from opera of "La Gioconda." Dance, "The Hours of Night." A characteristic dance, made without toe-steps. Gliding, soothing, assuaging, the gay scarfs changed to black, if possible. Music changes suddenly into a dirge. Dancers pause. May be Bohm's "Calm as the Night" or Massenet's "Elegie."*]

VOICES [*off stage, very softly*].
Low on the hills,
Wounded or dead,
Eyes closed forever. . . . Woe, woe, for us!
Kind winds bewail;
Heaven turns pale;
Shrill cries the piteous dirge . . . forever . . . Woe, woe!
[*Enter R. and crossing stage pass out L. a* PROCESSION. *Men, women and children participate. They personate cripples with crutches, blind persons with heads bandaged or closed eyes, children lead them. A litter is borne along with them. Dress is of poorest, rags,—and general poverty indicated.* FAMINE *stalks by* IGNORANCE *and* HUNGER, *all empty-handed. Exeunt L.*]

JUNO. Hebe, child, who sent this? What is its meaning?

HEBE [*sadly*]. It is the harvest of war; it is the ruin following the whirlwind of hate and murder. [*Brief pause. All silent.*]

JUNO. Hebe, too true, too true. I saw no gold, no honors, no glory, no prosperity there. [*Lays aside crown and scepter, wearily.*]

HEBE. Dear Protector, there can be none.

JUNO [*spiritedly*]. But we must not give way to sympathy. We must harden our hearts if we are to win,—must fight to the end no matter how bitter it be. We must accomplish the fall of all that is without our own realm and who think not as we do. Strike, cymbals. [*The* CYMBAL GIRLS *come forward a few steps and clash. Music, Handel: "See the conquering hero comes," or other dignified, martial music.* VENUS *rear, pushes the curtains aside slightly, that audience may see her, but not* JUNO *and her retinue. She disappears, music continuing. Enter again R. attended by her* MAIDENS FAIR, *the* ROSE CHAIN, FAIRIES, FLOWERS (*selected*) *and the* LOVES, *minus* CUPID. *As she advances, R. to L. towards throne, the* CYMBAL GIRLS *let their instruments fall, one by one, as music dies.* VENUS *pauses R. center.* JUNO *lowers at the intrusion.*]

VENUS [*sweetly and bravely*].

Dear white-armed goddess
At whose glance Jove trembles,
For whom the thunder leaps from cloud to cloud,
And waters roll about the world,—
Lady of Olympus, peace!
Let not your subjects rouse the elements
And thus teach discord to the listening earth.
Disperse thy dark Hours, thy warriors, thy anger,
And let joy and love soothe and dissolve the wounds of hate.

[JUNO *descends throne in dignified manner, coming down L. while* VENUS *keeps R. Also R. the* MAIDENS FAIR *pose, the* ROSE CHAIN *wave hoops rhyth-*

*mically. The* LOVES *leave the side of* VENUS *and mingle informally among the attendants of* JUNO, *showing no fear, even merriment.*]

JUNO [*haughtily*]. Why comes the Queen of Beauty to Juno's court?

VENUS [*softly*]. I come only to ask for my own, dear goddess. Give me back my Girdle, my joy of life, my symbol of power.

JUNO. The Golden Cestus—the Girdle of Love?

VENUS. Yes, great Queen.

JUNO. I have it not.

VENUS. Oh, Queen, I loaned it to thee, long time since, that Jove, beholding thee, might turn his affections to thee again from the daughters of men.

JUNO [*sadly*]. True. But its brief time and mission ended. I sent it back to thee by hand of Mercury. [*Scornfully.*] The Girdle is a delusion—its work is idle talk.

VENUS [*clasping hands*].

Oh, say not so. You have not used it right.
It cannot work its lesson of love divine
If hate reigns in that heart of thine.
I—I alone can understand its might.
While lost from me, life mourns its dead;
And mercy from mankind is fled;
The sun must even hide his light
If mankind grovels in the fight.

JUNO [*angrily*]. I tell thee once and for all—I have it not! [VENUS *shakes head as if unbelieving. She turns to the* MAIDENS, *who inclose her in a ring of arms.*] Thou believest not? Dare to disdain the word of the Splendor of the heavens? War! War! Earth! Air! Fire! To arms! [CYMBAL GIRLS *run down stage, L.F. clanging their instruments.* WARRIORS (*donned with spears and helmets*) *range in line front of* JUNO, *L. The* HOURS *huddle affrighted, near throne. The* ROSE CHAIN, FLOWERS *and* FAIRIES, *range in opposing file.* VENUS *and* MAIDENS *in rear, R.* JUNO *retreats slightly towards throne, L. Dance,*

*"Ballet of Hate and Love." Music, Bohm: "With Re, sounding Song" (Sang und Klang). Begin at main portion, omitting introduction. Very fast.* CYMBAL GIRLS *accompany music.* WARRIORS *approach* ROSE CHAIN. *They throw their garlands over the spears, and laugh as they entangle them. The* LOVES *get in the way of the* CYMBALISTS, *reaching for the instruments, try to catch the girls' hands. Back curtains draw apart while this is going on, and enter the Car of Love. It is drawn by* MERCURY *and his* ELVES. *The Car proceeds slowly between the files, each side retreating. As it reaches front,* CUPID *rises from its platform, or from out a great flower on it, and holds up the Girdle to view.* VENUS *springs forward with a cry.* PEACE, *in flowing white drapery, appears from behind the Car. She helps* CUPID *down.* CUPID *clasps the Girdle about* VENUS, *who caresses him.* PEACE *takes* JUNO'S *hand and places it over* VENUS', *center.*]

PEACE.

Brave minds, howe'er at war, are secret friends,
Their generous discord with the battle ends.
In peace, they wonder whence dissension rose,
And ask how souls so like could e'er be foes.

[PEACE *steps slightly back,* CUPID *comes between* JUNO *and* VENUS, *the three join hands. A* LOVE *plays hoop with* JUNO'S *scepter and crown about the stage.* LOVES *are taken up by the* GIRLS OF JUNO, *and carried about. The stage fills with the dramatic cast.*]

[CURTAIN]

## LIST OF SUGGESTED MUSICAL WORKS

used in "Light Triumphant" to illustrate mood and atmosphere. All or near all are pieces the whole world knows.

PROLOGUE

Daybreak, from "Peer Gynt Suite" ..... Grieg
Rustle of Spring, Op. 32, No. 3 ..... Sinding

Gentle Breeze ..... Bohm

ACT ONE

Barcarolle, from "Oberon" ..... von Weber
Chansonette, Op. 13 ..... Kopylow
Callirhoe Ballet ..... Chaminade
Wedding March ..... Mendelssohn
Spring Song, from "Songs Without Words" Mendelssohn
La Fontaine ..... Bohm
Aragonaise, from "La Cid" ..... Massenet
La Guitarre ..... Bohm
Glow Worm ..... Lincke
Murmuring Brook ..... Poldini
Rondo Capriccioso ..... Mendelssohn
Coquetry ..... Wachs
Erotik ..... Grieg

INTERLUDE

Water Sprites, Op. 47 ..... Heller
Tarentelle (E flat) ..... Heller

ACT TWO

Dance of the Hours (Day) from "Gioconda" . Ponchielli
Prelude, Op. 23, No. 5 (g mi.) ..... Rachmaninoff
Dance of the Hours (Night) from "Gioconda". Ponchielli
Elegie ..... Massenet
Martial Music, selected
Sang und Klang (With Resounding Song) ..... Bohm

# MAY MADNESS *

*A MUSICAL FANTASY*

By

BONNIE GILBERT

* A five-dollar royalty is asked for each performance to be paid to the author, Miss Bonnie Gilbert, 806 Greenwood Ave., Chattanooga, Tenn.

## CHARACTERS

May Madness
The Principal
Polly
Molly
Cholly
Folly
Faculty
Six handmaidens
And an equal number of boys and girls of a graduating class

# MAY MADNESS

SCENE—*Part of a school campus with a path along back. The side of the path toward the audience is marked by a series of flower-wreathed arches which are tall enough to make an agreeable picture when young ladies are looking through them. Shrubs should be banked along the bottom of the path of arches to represent a small hedge.*

*The music should be gay, sparkling, and lilting in measure. The music for* MAY MADNESS *should be reflective, hinting of trouble and the occult. The music for the boys at their entrance and through the first part of their scene should suggest excitement and distress.*

*As the curtain rises* MOLLY *enters from left and* POLLY *from right, distraught. The roses have been lost; that is serious, for pretty girls cannot graduate without roses.*

POLLY [*entering from right and wringing her hands*]. Have the roses come?

MOLLY [*entering from left, hands uplifted in distress*].

Not a rose can I find;
Everything I've looked behind!

[*They pass each other, walking swiftly.*]

BOTH. We're so upset. We're in a pet!

POLLY [*stopping suddenly*]. Did you phone them?

MOLLY. Yes, I did. [*They pass each other swiftly as before.*]

POLLY. We are in a dreadful state—

MOLLY. Yes, we cannot graduate

BOTH. Without roses! [*They finish with both at center for the duet, "No Roses."*]

NO ROSES

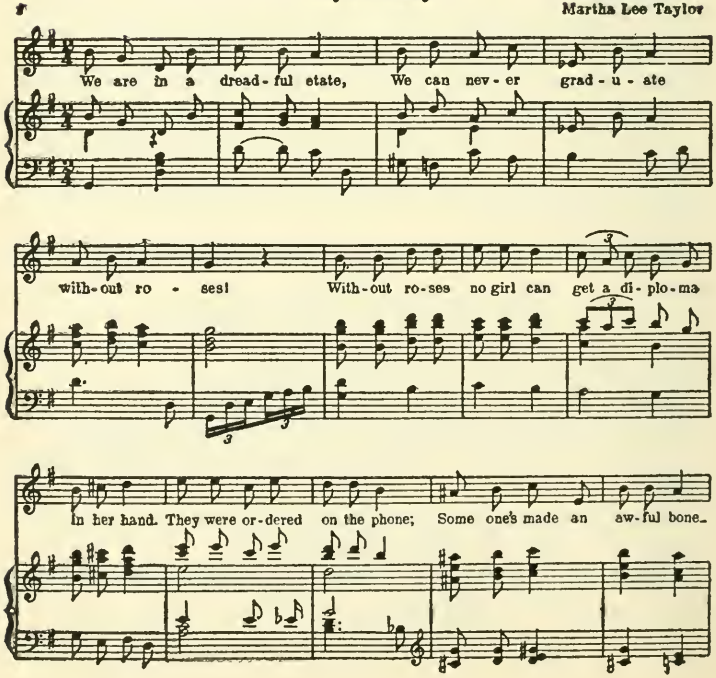
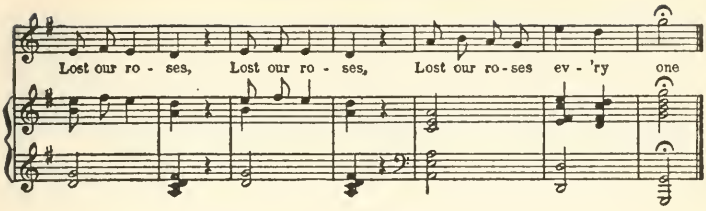
We are in a dreadful state,
We can never graduate
Without roses!
Without roses no girl can
Get a diploma in her hand.

They were ordered on the phone;
Someone's made an awful bone—
[*Business of distress.*]
Lost our roses,
Lost our roses,
Lost our roses every one!

## No Roses

**Polly and Molly**

Jesse Alexander
Martha Lee Taylor


We are in a dread-ful state, We can nev-er grad-u-ate
with-out ro-ses! With-out ro-ses no girl can get a di-plo-ma
In her hand. They were or-dered on the phone; Some one's made an aw-ful bone.

[*Enter a group of girls from left and a group from right. They stop left and right of center.*]

LEFT GROUP [*hands locked in anxiety*]. Have they come?

RIGHT GROUP [*hands uplifted in distress*]. Have our roses come?

MOLLY [*wheeling about, desperately*]. They have not!

POLLY [*also wheeling about*]. They have not!

ALL [*together*]. Oh, my goodness! [*All the girls while keeping the rhythm of the music with a simple chorus step sing together.*]

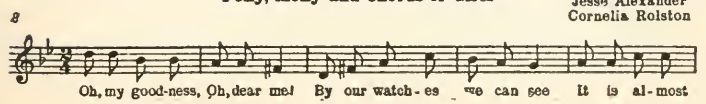
OH, MY GOODNESS!

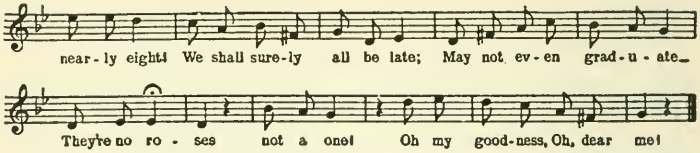
Oh, my goodness,
Oh, dear me!
By our watches we can see
[*Look at wrist watches*]
It is almost nearly eight!
We shall surely all be late;
May not even graduate—
There're no roses,
Not a one!
Oh, my goodness,
Oh, dear me!

## Oh, My Goodness

**Polly, Molly and Chorus of Girls**

Jesse Alexander
Cornelia Rolston

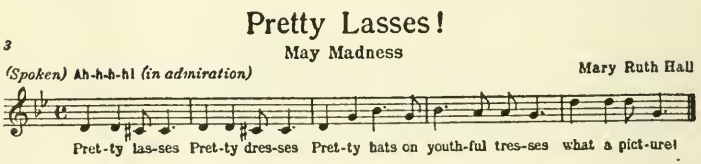





[*Enter* MAY MADNESS, *charming enchantress, wearing a gauze or tulle veil, gray, mauve or pearl. It is bound to her forehead by a narrow band. She carries a wand to symbolize the occult. Her bangles and bracelets help to differentiate her costume from the others, all of whom have on their vari-colored class-day dresses.*]

MAY MADNESS [*in admiration*].

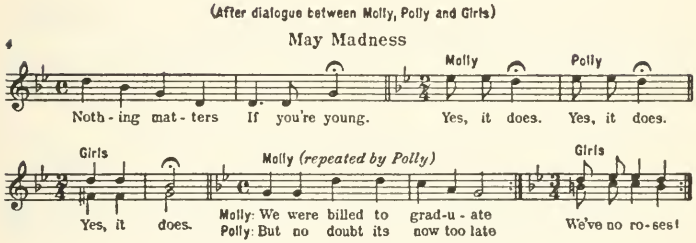
OH-h-h-h!
Pretty lasses,
Pretty dresses,
Pretty hats
On youthful tresses!
What a picture!


Pretty Lasses!
3
May Madness
(Spoken) Ah-h-h-h! (in admiration)
Mary Ruth Hall
Pret-ty las-ses Pret-ty dres-ses Pret-ty hats on youth-ful tres-ses what a pict-ure!

MOLLY. Nothing's pretty any more.
POLLY. We were happy heretofore.
LEFT GROUP. Nothing's pretty any more.
RIGHT GROUP. We were happy heretofore.
MAY MADNESS. Nothing matters if you're young.
MOLLY. Yes, it does.
POLLY. Yes, it does.

MOLLY. We were billed to graduate—
POLLY. But, no doubt, it's now too late.
GIRLS.

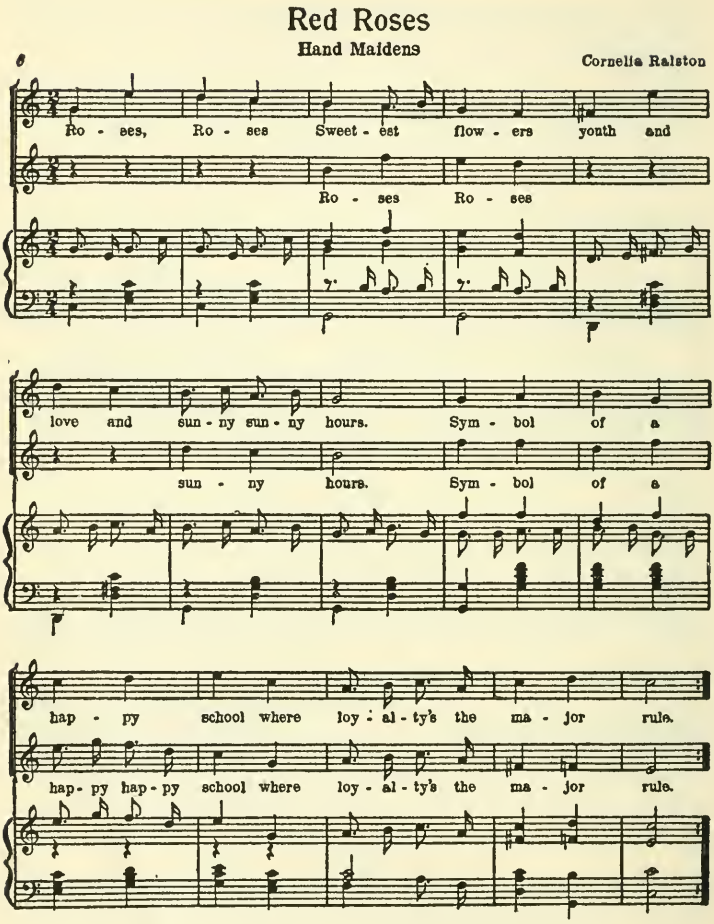
We've no roses!
We've no roses!




MAY MADNESS [*comforting but wily*]. But I have!
GIRLS [*eagerly*]. Red roses?
MAY MADNESS [*nodding her head*]. Red roses. [*She beckons off left and right. Maidens enter with gliding dance steps and bearing long-handled baskets of red roses. They place these along front of stage where they stay throughout the play.*]
MAY MADNESS, MAIDENS, *and* GIRLS [*sing, chorus effect*].

RED ROSES

Roses, roses,
Sweetest flowers;
They are youth and love
And sunny hours.
Symbol of our happy, happy school
Where loyalty's our major rule.


Red Roses
Hand Maidens
Cornelia Ralston
Ro - ses, Ro - ses Sweet - est flow - ers youth and
Ro - ses Ro - ses
love and sun - ny sun - ny hours. Sym - bol of a
sun - ny hours. Sym - bol of a
hap - py school where loy - al - ty's the ma - jor rule.
hap - py hap - py school where loy - al - ty's the ma - jor rule.

[*At close, girls step forward and make as if to help themselves to the roses.*]

MAY MADNESS [*lifting arm*]. Forbear!

GIRLS. Where?

MAY MADNESS [*pointing to roses*]. There!

GIRLS. No roses?

MAY MADNESS. Unless you pay.

MOLLY. What price?

POLLY. Yes, what price?

MAY MADNESS. You must accept a burden in exchange.

GIRLS. A burden? A burden? A burden in exchange?

MAY MADNESS. A burden in exchange. [GIRLS *exchange looks of wonder.*]

MOLLY. What is it?

MAY MADNESS. You must trust me.

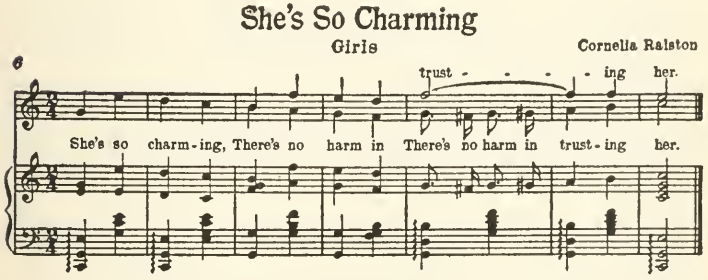
GIRLS [*both left and right groups, heads to this side and that side*]. Shall we? Shall we? Shall we trust her?

MOLLY [*tips of fingers away from audience touching her chin while the elbow rests lightly on the tips of the fingers of the other hand*]. She's so charming—

POLLY [*same pose*]. There's no harm in—

GIRLS [*same pose*]. Trusting her! [GIRLS *while milling around to the music sing.*]

She's so charming
There's no harm in
Trusting her.

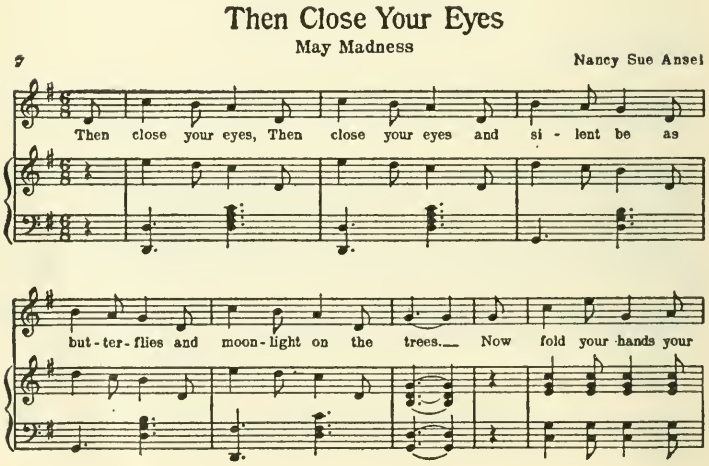


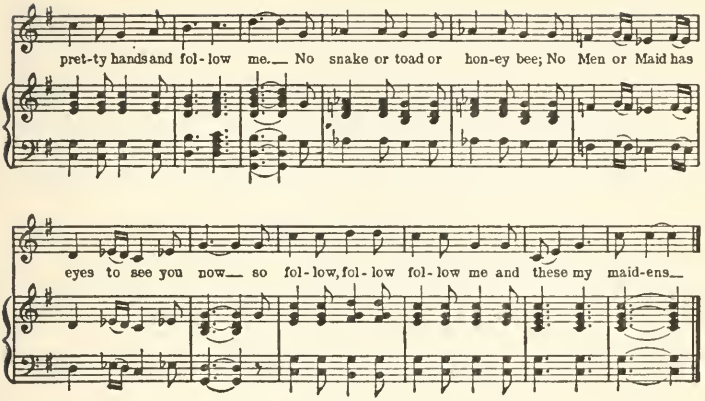

GIRLS [*in position left and right of stage*]. We—will trust you!

MAY MADNESS [*assuming command, sings*].

Then close your eyes,
Then close your eyes
And silent be
As butterflies
And moonlight on the trees.

Now fold your hands,
Your pretty hands,
And follow me.
No snake or toad
Or honey bee;
No man or maid
Has eyes to see
You now. So
Follow, follow
Me and these,
My maidens.


Then Close Your Eyes
May Madness
Nancy Sue Ansel
Then close your eyes, Then close your eyes and si - lent be as
but - ter - flies and moon - light on the trees. Now fold your hands your


pret-ty hands and fol-low me.— No snake or toad or hon-ey bee; No Men or Maid has
eyes to see you now— so fol-low, fol-low fol-low me and these my maid-ens—

[MAY MADNESS' *maidens dance up center stage where they divide, three leading the right group in a pretty semi-circle to front and then to back of stage leaving a girl off at each arch. The other three maidens simultaneously do the same with the left group of girls, taking them in a pretty semi-circle down front; then off left, around and up along the path of arches, leaving off a girl at each arch. The maidens use pretty arm motions and gliding steps for this. After the girls are placed in the arches, the dancing maidens use the same motions for coming out from behind the arches to positions extreme left and right of stage.* MAY MADNESS *during this scene keeps the center stage, where with pretty movements of her arms and body she glides back, then down stage ready for the song, "The Price." During the song the maidens stand to right and left of* MAY MADNESS, *keeping time with feet and arms; they also sing.*]

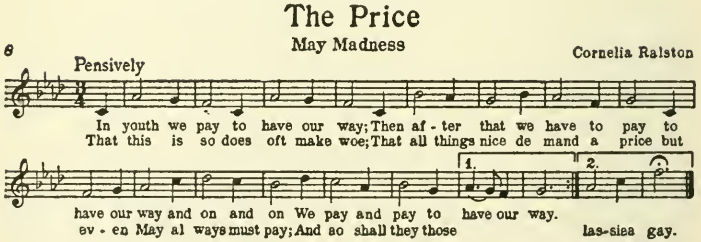
MAY MADNESS [*clapping her hands, calling the maidens to her, sings*].

THE PRICE

In youth we pay
To have our way;
Then after that
We have to pay

To have our way.
And on and on
We pay and pay
To have our way.

That this is so
Too oft makes woe:
That all things nice
Demand a price.
But even May
Always must pay;
And so shall they
And so shall they—
Those lasses gay.
And so shall they—
Those lasses gay.


The Price
May Madness
Cornelia Ralston
Pensively
In youth we pay to have our way; Then af - ter that we have to pay to
That this is so does oft make woe; That all things nice de mand a price but
1.
2.
have our way and on and on We pay and pay to have our way.
ev - en May al ways must pay; And so shall they those las-sies gay.

[May Madness *claps her hands and starts off stage left, followed by the maidens. They are arrested in their flight by voices off left and run back right. Little music runs add interest to their flight.*]

Boys [*off left*]. They went this way.

Boys [*off right*]. They went this way. [*They enter and see* May Madness, *who smiles engagingly. Three maidens are at extreme right front and three at extreme left front.*]

Cholly [*making a sweeping bow*]. We beg your pardon, pretty lass—

FOLLY [*who heads right group*]. But have you seen some lasses pass?

MAY MADNESS [*coyly*]. Pretty lasses?

BOYS [*together, both groups*]. Yes, pretty lasses.

MAY MADNESS [*archly*]. And very young?

CHOLLY.

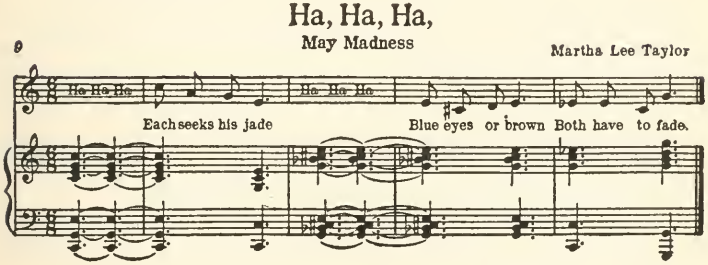
Young and pretty,
Eyes of blue—

FOLLY [*interrupting*].

Her eyes were brown;
You seen her 'round?

MAY MADNESS.

Ha, ha, ha!
Each seeks his jade.
Ha, ha, ha!
Blue eyes or brown
Both have to fade!

[*She repeats this in song.*]

CHOLLY [*hinting, and looking at his watch*].

It's getting late;
It's half past eight!

FOLLY [*tragically*].

Regard our state;
As sure as fate
Can't graduate!

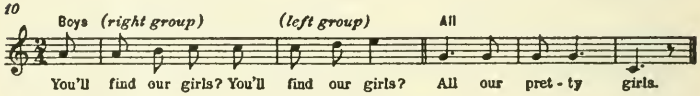
MAY MADNESS [*amused*].

Now, that's too bad;
It's even sad.
I can't resist
To ask you why?

BOYS [*distressed, both groups*]. We've lost the girls!
CHOLLY [*explaining*]. We've lost Molly.
FOLLY [*even more distressed*]. We've lost Polly!
BOYS [*both groups, in as bad state*]. We've lost all our girls!
MAY MADNESS [*suddenly sympathetic*].

I know, I know a thing or two,
And I will find the girls for you!

BOYS [*right group, sing*]. You'll find our girls?
BOYS [*left group, complete the phrase*]. You'll find our girls?

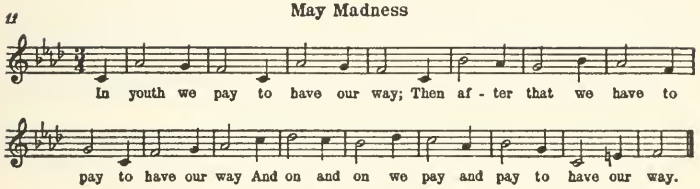



BOYS [*both groups together*]. All our pretty girls?
CHOLLY [*confidently*]. She'll find Molly!
FOLLY [*pleased*]. She'll find Polly!
BOYS [*together, eagerly*]. All our pretty girls!
MAY MADNESS [*archly*]. I will for pay. [*She sings.*]

In youth we pay
To have our way;
Then after that
We have to pay
To have our way.
And on and on
We pay and pay
To have our way.

**In Youth We Pay**

May Madness




BOYS [*right group; hands in pocket ready*]. What price?

BOYS [*left group; hands in pocket*]. What price?

MAY MADNESS [*archly*]. Not that. You must accept a responsibility in exchange.

BOYS [*together*]. Responsibility?

CHOLLY. Responsibility?

FOLLY. Did you say responsibility?

MAY MADNESS [*smiling*]. I said responsibility. [BOYS *exchange looks of doubt.*]

CHOLLY. What is it?

FOLLY. Yes, what is it?

BOYS [*all*]. Yes, what is it?

MAY MADNESS [*engagingly*]. You must trust me!

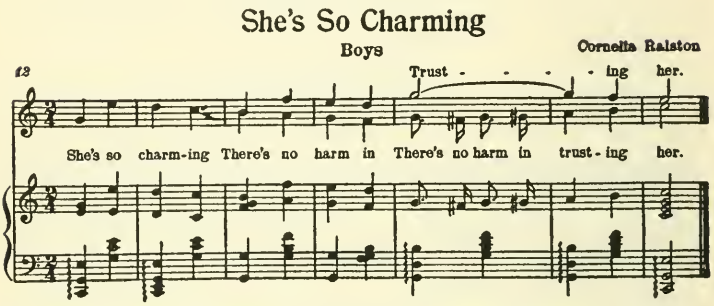
BOYS [*to each other*]. Shall we? Shall we? Shall we trust her?

CHOLLY [*thoughtfully, arms folded*]. She's so charming—

FOLLY [*thoughtfully, arms folded*]. There's no harm in—

Boys [*same way*]. Trusting her! [*Repeat to music, boys milling around.*]

She's so charming
There's no harm in
Trusting her!




Boys [*with decision*]. We—will trust you!
May Madness [*reciting dreamily in song*].

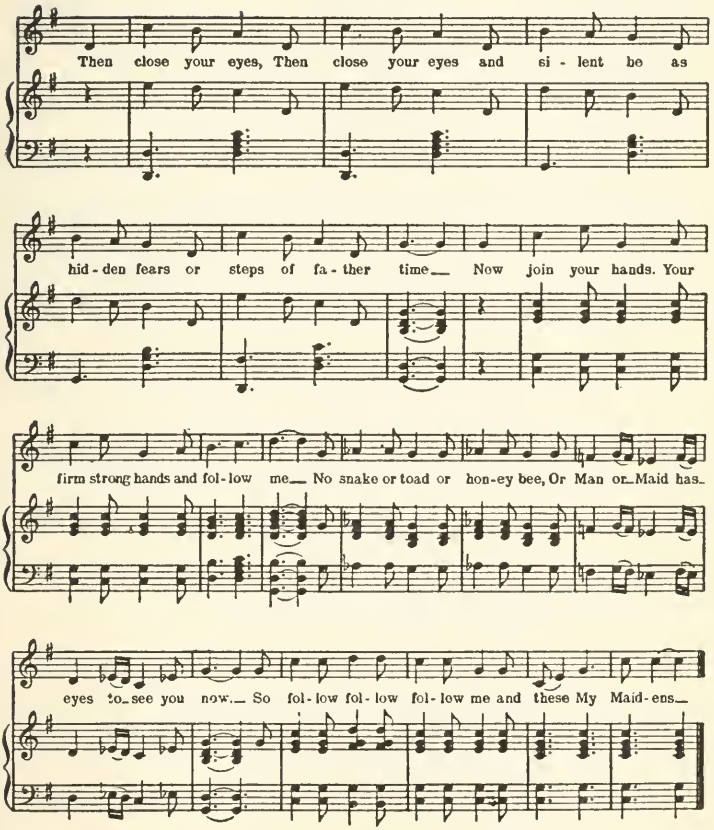
Then close your eyes,
Then close your eyes
And silent be
As hidden fears
Or steps of Father Time.

Now join your hands,
Your strong, young hands,
And follow me.
No snake or toad
Or honey bee
Or man or maid
Has eyes to see
You now. So
Follow, follow
Me and these,
My maidens.

## Then Close Your Eyes

May Madness

13 Nancy Sue Ansel


Then close your eyes, Then close your eyes and si - lent be as
hid - den fears or steps of fa - ther time Now join your hands. Your
firm strong hands and fol - low me No snake or toad or hon-ey bee, Or Man or Maid has
eyes to see you now. So fol - low fol - low fol - low me and these My Maid-ens

[*As with the girls, the dancing maidens lead the left and right groups around and back, the boys dropping hands and following submissively. As the maidens lead them along in front of the row of arches, a boy from left and one from right drop off and kneel before the arches, filling the arches from extreme right and left toward center, leav-*

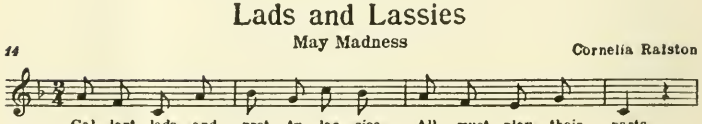
*ing* CHOLLY *and* FOLLY *at the extreme ends. The girls were left so that* MOLLY *and* POLLY *were behind the center arches. This arrangement gives the effect of each boy's proposing to the wrong girl. Boys should keep backs straight and heads up. Resting one hand on the knee that is up will brace them back besides looking better.*]

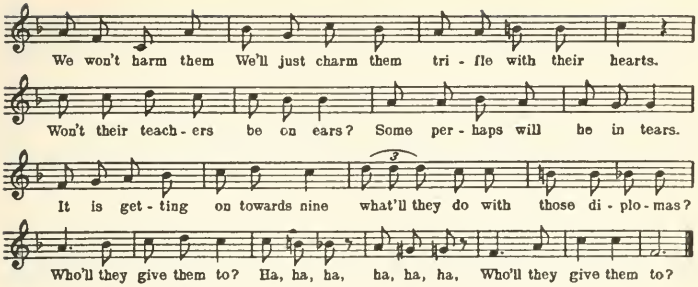
MAY MADNESS [*clapping hands for maidens to join her, which they do with dainty running steps, hands out and up. During the song they dance in little circles right and left of* MAY, *who is center. They then join in a large circle and time the dance to be back in place at extreme left and right by the end of the song*].

LADS AND LASSES

Gallant lads and pretty lasses
All must play their parts.
We won't harm them,
We'll just charm them—
Trifle with their hearts.

Won't their teachers
Be on ears?
Some, perhaps
Are drowned in tears.
It is getting on towards nine.
What'll they do with those diplomas?
Who'll they give them to?
Ha, ha, ha,
Ha, ha, ha,
Who'll they give them to?




We won't harm them We'll just charm them tri - fle with their hearts.
Won't their teach - ers be on ears? Some per - haps will be in tears.
It is get - ting on towards nine what'll they do with those di - plo - mas?
Who'll they give them to? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, Who'll they give them to?

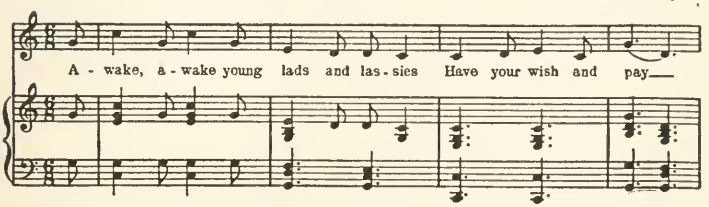
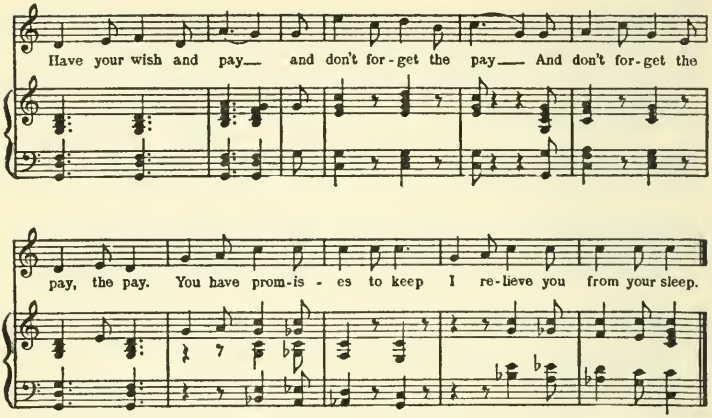
[*Maidens join her in the last three lines as they dance back to their places at right and left of stage.*]

MAY MADNESS. Now, for the fun! We'll remove the charm. [*She sings with graceful motions of her hands. The maidens follow with gliding steps and motions of their arms. They play behind her to center; then back to position, watching* MAY *and the row of proposing figures with amusement.*]

Awake, awake,
Young lads and lasses.
Have your wish and pay;
Have your wish and pay.
And don't forget the pay.
You have promises to keep;
So beware!
I relieve you from your sleep.

## Awake

May Madness

15 Martha Lee Taylor


Have your wish and pay— and don't for-get the pay— And don't for-get the
pay, the pay. You have prom-is - es to keep I re-lieve you from your sleep.

[*The girls lift their heads, see a kneeling boy; then rub their eyes. They tilt their heads left, then right to see if he is the right one. Discover he is not. They lift their hands and turn their heads in a gesture of disdain.*]

GIRLS [*together*]. We won't have you! Now! So there!

BOYS [*together vigorously*]. I am not proposing, I assure you! Now! So there!

POLLY [*anxiously*]. Where is Cholly?

MOLLY. Where is Folly? [*Boys rise, face left, stoop over to dust knees off, all except* CHOLLY *and* FOLLY *at ends of line. This should be done rather quickly to be ready for the music cue line, "Susan, Dot and Jane."*]

CHOLLY. Where is Polly?

FOLLY. Where is Molly?

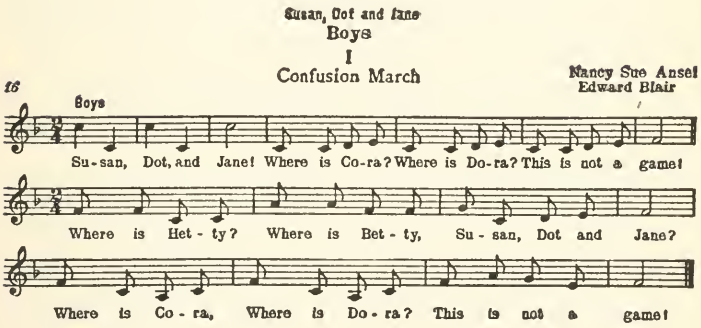
BOYS. Susan, Dot, and Jane? [*This line is sung and sets the time for a quick march, while singing, to extreme left, then right; then left again. Here the girls come around left and right from behind the arches and join in the march in such a way that there is a row of boys and a row of girls going in opposite directions and ending with the rows of boys all together in a group at extreme left of stage and the rows of girls in a group at extreme right.*

*The songs are repeated till this grouping is effected. Boys sing.*]

Susan, Dot, and Jane?
Where is Cora?
Where is Dora?
This is not a game!

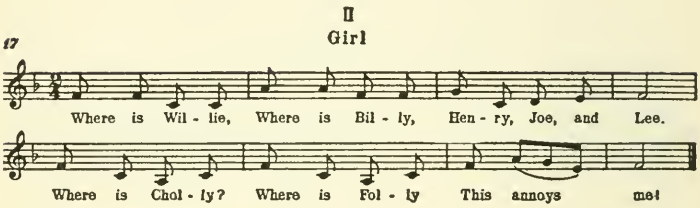
[*While singing they are passing in columns each looking for his special girl.*]

Where is Hetty,
Where is Betty,
Susan, Dot, and Jane?
Where is Cora?
Where is Dora?
This is not a game!


Susan, Dot and Jane
Boys
I
Confusion March
Nancy Sue Ansel
Edward Blair
16
Boys
Su-san, Dot, and Jane! Where is Co-ra? Where is Do-ra? This is not a game!
Where is Het-ty? Where is Bet-ty, Su-san, Dot and Jane?
Where is Co-ra, Where is Do-ra? This is not a game!

GIRLS [*leaving arches to right and left, coming down front but alternating rows with the boys, giving the effect of orderly confusion; they sing their own song. They too are looking each for a particular boy*].

Where is Willy,
Where is Billy,
Henry, Joe, and Lee?

Where is Cholly?
Where is Folly?
This annoys me!

[*To be repeated until girls are in position at right.*]

MAY MADNESS [*coming forward*]. Your promise! The roses!

GIRLS [*seeing her and remembering*]. We're cheated!

BOYS [*remembering*]. We're stung!!

MAY MADNESS [*to* GIRLS *with meaning*]. The roses?

GIRLS [*turning their backs on her; heads high*]. You can *have* them!

MAY MADNESS [*turning to* BOYS]. And the girls?

BOYS [*with sweeping gesture of polite mockery*]. You can have them, too!

GIRLS [*wheeling upon them haughtily*]. You!

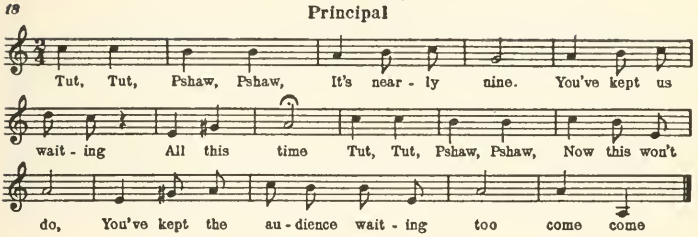
BOYS [*making deep bow*]. A thousand pardons, ladies! [*Enter the Faculty, very fortunately. They are astonished. Each carries a bundle of absurdly large diplomas. The* PRINCIPAL *wears a tall, silk hat which is not on straight. At his entrance* MAY MADNESS *hides behind girl down front, watching him conspicuously, however.*]

PRINCIPAL [*walking nervously back and forth, hands behind him and occasionally flipping the tails of his coat. Sings.*]

Tut, tut, pshaw, pshaw!
It's nearly nine.
You've kept us waiting
All this time!

Tut, tut, pshaw, pshaw!
Now, this won't do.
You've kept the audience
Waiting, too!
Come, come!

**Tut, Tut, Tsh, Tsh**


13
Principal
Tut, Tut, Pshaw, Pshaw, It's near - ly nine. You've kept us
wait - ing All this time Tut, Tut, Pshaw, Pshaw, Now this won't
do, You've kept the au - dience wait - ing too come come

[*He discovers* MAY MADNESS, *who is laughing at his discomposure. She has come out from behind the girls and stands boldly out.* PRINCIPAL, *surprised.*]

Ah, ha, I see, I understand!
There's mischief here on either hand!
May Madness causes this affray;
I thought you'd gone away to stay!

MAY MADNESS [*teasingly*].

Now, Ichabod, don't raise a row,
If you insist, *I'll* show you how.
All work, no play will make you dummer
Than you were then that pleasant summer.

PRINCIPAL [*defensively*].

I'm older now, and wiser, too!
These pranks you play some day you'll rue!

Here, lads and lasses, May's a jade!
She's springtime madness, no young maid!

Sing Alma Mater good and stout,
That always puts the jade to rout!

[*They sing one phrase right lustily.* MAY *and maidens flee off stage, going up center and around the girls. They go with hands over ears to shut out the sound. As they leave, the chorus stops suddenly and singers point arms full length jeeringly with hearty laughter at the fiasco.*]

See there! She's gone, the naughty sprite!
She's caused my head to ache to-night!

[*He wipes his brow with a large white handkerchief.*]

CHOLLY [*steps out with a courtly bow*]. Well, 'Fesser, even though it's late—

MOLLY [*who steps out with a curtsy*]. Are you to let us graduate?

PRINCIPAL.

Indeed, I will. Line up; you've gotter
And sing out lusty the Alma Mater!

[*The girls down front lead across stage left, two and two, followed by the boys who cross to right falling in behind the girls, the Faculty following last. Note that the last girls off take up the baskets of roses and carry them triumphantly off.*]

NOTE. The music for *May Madness* was composed by pupils of the class in harmony at Chattanooga High School.

[CURTAIN]

# A BETTER MOUSE TRAP *

By

MARION HOLBROOK

* Used by courtesy of the author.

## CHARACTERS

HENRY HEPPLEWAITE, *president of the Hepplewaite Paint Company*
BOB, *his son and business partner*
MARY, *his daughter*
BARBARA, ANN, ALICE } *friends of* MARY *who have just been graduated*
GORDON SUTCLIFFE, HORACE CLARK, JOE CARTER } *just out of college*

# A BETTER MOUSE TRAP

SCENE—*The living room of the Hepplewaite home, a comfortable, tastefully furnished room. There is a library table up right with an easy chair beside it facing the room and audience. Up left is a lounge with floor lamp at one end, end table, etc. There are book cases at right wall down stage from door leading to dining room and perhaps a desk at left wall to balance book cases. Chairs, lamps and other furnishings are used as desired. A door down left leads to vestibule and French doors at center back open on a porch. These are merely suggestions as it is possible for setting, exits and entrances to be determined by facilities.*

HENRY HEPPLEWAITE *is seated down right reading morning paper.* BOB *enters, left.*

BOB. Good morning, Dad.

HEPPLEWAITE [*grumpily*]. 'Morning.

BOB [*coming down center*]. S'matter? Oil down?

HEPPLEWAITE. No.

BOB [*smiling*]. Coffee bad?

HEPPLEWAITE [*emphatically*]. No.

BOB. Anything wrong at the plant?

HEPPLEWAITE. No, not yet.

BOB [*smiling as he seats himself down left*]. I know what's wrong with you. You're worrying about that offer to hire a Cruikshank graduate this year. I warned you not to get sentimental over your alma mater. [HEPPLEWAITE *snaps his paper, puts it down and scowls at* BOB. BOB *rather enjoying himself.*] And now the Hepplewaite Paint Company, that is to say you and I, owe some youth a living. It's a bad year to take on amateur salesmen, too.

HEPPLEWAITE. I shouldn't have minded that, Bob. What I don't like is Mary having this fool houseparty and asking those boys down here. I wrote the dean that I'd interview them at my office. Mary's got no right to interfere with my business.

BOB [*grinning*]. Why don't you tell her and put a stop to it?

HEPPLEWAITE [*weakly*]. I—I never could do anything with Mary.

BOB [*much amused*]. You mean you never tried. Giving Mary her own way is too much fun. Well, spare the rod and spoil the business!

HEPPLEWAITE. You know anything about these young men?

BOB. Oh, yes. Gordon Sutcliffe—everyone knows him—best football player Cruikshank ever had.

HEPPLEWAITE [*testily*]. What's that got to do with selling paint?

BOB. Nothing. Nevertheless, Sutcliffe applied for the job. So did Horace Clark. Clark's an honor student. Took prizes in Latin, history and mathematics.

HEPPLEWAITE [*emphatically*]. My customers don't speak Latin and the only higher mathematics they know is the price on paint! Wait till I tell that upstart that.

BOB. Oh, I've known brainy fellows who made good.

HEPPLEWAITE. History's one thing; paint's another. There's a third applicant, isn't there?

BOB. Yes. Chap named Joe Carter. Joe worked his way as a gardener and chauffeur. He's a queer one.

HEPPLEWAITE [*heatedly*]. It beats my time how these poor fellows hire out as day laborers so they can learn a lot of highbrow stuff that hasn't got a selling price! Now that young man ought to have got him a good steady job four years ago. He couldn't afford a college education and I'll bet he's so full of notions now that he couldn't sell a life preserver to a drowning man!

BOB [*laughing*]. If he can sell paint to Birdsall Broth-

ers or Lynch and Palmer that's all we need to worry about.

HEPPLEWAITE. Remember—you've been two years trying to do that yourself. If we could get those two accounts we'd be the strongest paint concern going.

BOB. And old man Lynch won't even paint the fence in front of his house.

HEPPLEWAITE. What do I care about his fence? [*Hammering on the arm of his chair.*] I want to see Hepplewaite paint on the shelves of his hardware store. Let his fences rot! [MARY *enters, center back, during this speech and listens disapprovingly. She is a nice little person, clever and sweet-tempered and capable of getting her own way without appearing to do so.*]

MARY [*stopping her ears*]. Oh, business again! [*Both try, unsuccessfully, to glare at her. It is obvious that she is irresistible to her family.*]

MARY. Mustn't talk paint all the time. Give your breakfasts a chance to digest. [*Going over and patting her father affectionately on the back.*] Dad, you're not going to be horrid about the boys, are you?

HEPPLEWAITE. No, Mary, but you ought to have kept out of this. Women shouldn't mix in business.

MARY [*sternly*]. I'm just trying to apply humane principles, Dad. Capital and labor must be put on a new social basis. Why, Dad, all big business is done over the luncheon table nowadays.

HEPPLEWAITE [*smiling at her tolerantly*]. Just the same, Mary, the Hepplewaite Paint Company does its business over a desk.

MARY. But I thought I was fixing something nice for you. You know you can't tell anything about a man until you see him in his natural environment. I know just how it is. I can't tell a thing about a woman until I've been through a rubber of bridge with her! [BOB *snorts.* MARY *gives him indignant look.*]

HEPPLEWAITE [*rising*]. Well, Mary, I'll interview them this morning, right here in the Hepplewaite homestead.

Couldn't be anything more natural than that, could there?

MARY. Good! I'm sure you'll find one of them awfully good.

HEPPLEWAITE [*looking at her sharply*]. You are, eh? Any idea which one?

MARY [*quickly*]. Oh, no.

HEPPLEWAITE. After all, Cruikshank has always turned out good men. Best school in the country. [*He goes out, left.*]

BOB. Look here, Mary. Why did you have to ask Barbara Lynch over here? You know it's awfully awkward for me.

MARY. You're sore just because you can't sell paint to her father.

BOB [*getting up*]. If you'd been put out of his office as many times as I have you wouldn't think it was so funny. The whole family's got the habit of turning me down.

MARY. Maybe one of the boys will win old Lynch over!

BOB [*starting out, left*]. Don't be ridiculous, Mary. Haven't I tried every method of salesmanship known to man?

MARY. You probably over-looked the human equation. Ever try discussing anything besides business? Ever ask him to recommend a good tailor?

BOB. Why on earth should I ask him that?

MARY. Because there isn't a man living who doesn't like to talk about his tailor if he has one, stupid.

BOB [*as he goes out*]. It's a pity Dad doesn't take you into the business!

MARY [*calling after him*]. It might be better for Hepplewaite paint if he did! [*She stands looking after him angrily.* ANN *enters, center back.*]

ANN. Mary, for goodness' sake, tell me what kind of cigars your father smokes.

MARY. Why?

ANN. Joe says he wants to buy some. He's sitting out

there trying to think of things to make a good impression. He certainly is dumb.

MARY. Why I think that's a good idea. Good psychology. [*She rummages around in table drawer and finally produces a cigar.*]

MARY. Here's one, Ann. I'll take it out to him. He can give it to Dad and save his money.

ANN [*taking magazine from table and seating herself down right*]. I'm going to stay in here a while, if you don't mind. I'm tired of hearing Gordon and Horace discuss "success." Glad I don't run an employment agency for college grads.

MARY. I think some of us should keep encouraging them. [MARY *goes out, center back. In a moment* ALICE *enters, followed by* BARBARA. ALICE *goes down to bookcases and examines books.*]

ALICE [*reading titles*]. "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire," Byron, Shakespeare and O. Henry, Barbara.

BARBARA. Of course. They're in every bookcase in the country.

ANN. What are you doing, Alice?

BARBARA [*laughing*]. Gordon feels that he must know Mr. Hepplewaite's favorite author and Alice is trying to find out who it is.

ALICE. He thinks it may help make a good impression.

BARBARA. Did you ever see such idiots? They're sitting out there trying to think up all sorts of psychological effects and Mary's egging them on!

ANN. Horace has read every encyclopedia in the college library on "paint" and he's never had a brush in his hand!

ALICE. The only thing any of them know is how to paint the campus red after a football game!

BARBARA [*laughing*]. Don't fuss over them. It's so much simpler to refuse to marry them until they make good.

ANN [*coldly*]. Is that what you did?

BARBARA. I told Bob not to come around until he and Dad stopped quarreling over paint.

ALICE [*disapprovingly*]. And you didn't try to influence your father?

BARBARA [*lightly*]. No, my place is in the breakfast nook, not the paint business, and I don't see why Mary mixes in, unless she's awfully anxious for one of these boys to have the job.

ANN [*quickly*]. It couldn't be Horace.

ALICE. And she knows I've been wearing Gordon's pin ever since the Junior Prom.

BARBARA. Well, it certainly couldn't be that Joe Carter.

ANN [*thoughtfully*]. No. He's nobody at all.

ALICE. No. Joe's hopeless.

ANN. Do you suppose—

ALICE. I can't believe it of Mary.

ANN [*rising*]. Let's go out and talk to the boys. [MARY *enters right.*]

MARY [*vivaciously*]. I've got Dad in a beautiful humor and he's going to see the boys in here right away.

BARBARA. Good. Let's have a nice gossipy rubber of bridge.

ANN. We've been wondering why you asked the boys down, Mary. You want one of them to get the job, don't you?

MARY. Of course I do.

ALICE. But there's one in particular, isn't there?

MARY [*smiling*]. Well, suppose there is?

BARBARA. Is it Joe?

MARY [*laughing*]. I can't think of anyone who needs a job worse than Joe.

ALICE. Do you think Gordon ought to have it?

MARY. It would be nice if it turned out that way, wouldn't it?

ANN. Suppose Horace got it?

MARY. Horace ought to succeed, hadn't he?

BARBARA. Mary, you're hiding something!

MARY [*laughing*]. You're all too ridiculous! [*Taking* ANN *and* ALICE *by the arm.*] Can't you see that I'm trying to get you out of here politely? You'll find cards and everything on the porch. [*She propels them out, center back, but lingers for a moment herself. Her father enters, left, goes to table and looks in drawer.*]

MARY. Want anything, Dad?

HEPPLEWAITE [*looking in drawer*]. I was just looking for a cigar. Someone gave me one of those terrible Columbos and I wanted to make sure I threw it out. [*Closes drawer.*] Oh, well, just so I don't offer it to anyone. [MARY *looks startled.* GORDON *enters, right.*]

GORDON. You wanted to see me in here, Mr. Hepplewaite? [MARY *goes out.*]

HEPPLEWAITE [*cordially*]. Just have a seat over there, Mr. Sutcliffe. [*He indicates chair or lounge down left and* SUTCLIFFE *crosses over and sits down. He is athletic type, quite sure of himself.*]

HEPPLEWAITE [*taking easy chair*]. So you're interested in the paint business, are you?

SUTCLIFFE. Yes, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. Ever do any painting?

GORDON. Don't know that I ever did.

HEPPLEWAITE. Think you could sell paint when you don't know anything about it?

SUTCLIFFE. It's pep and push that puts a thing over these days, don't you think?

HEPPLEWAITE. Oh, yes, there's something in that. Now what did you learn at Cruikshank that would contribute pep and push to my paint business?

SUTCLIFFE [*earnestly*]. When you've played on the varsity football team for four years, Mr. Hepplewaite, you learn a lot. Take that game with Perkins last season, for instance. Now Perkins was down on our ten-yard line and—

HEPPLEWAITE. Say, I saw that game! Were you the fellow who carried the ball that time?

SUTCLIFFE. Yeah, I made that touchdown.

HEPPLEWAITE [*going over and holding out his hand*]. Well, well! I didn't realize that. I've always wanted to shake hands with the man who made that touchdown!

SUTCLIFFE [*rising and shaking hands*]. That was a great game!

HEPPLEWAITE. Some forward passes, too!

SUTCLIFFE. I'll say there were!

HEPPLEWAITE. You know, I got some new batteries for my radio out of that game. [*Chuckling.*] Never afraid to put a little on a Cruikshank game!

SUTCLIFFE. You should have seen us in action last Thanksgiving!

HEPPLEWAITE. Well now, my boy, take that same spirit into the paint business and make good. It's the Cruikshank spirit. Best college in the country. I'm going to give you a trial. You see what you can do with the Lynch and Palmer Hardware Company. I'll give you a month to sell 'em. [*They walk toward center back doors.*]

SUTCLIFFE. I'll know how to tackle 'em, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. I believe that anyone who can hit the line the way you can can sell paint! Tell Clark I'll see him next. [*They shake hands again and* GORDON *goes out.* HEPPLEWAITE *walks up front, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. Great stuff! [CLARK *enters, center back. He is sleek, scholarly type. Has great air of assurance.*]

CLARK. Are you ready to see me, Mr. Hepplewaite?

HEPPLEWAITE. Yes, Mr. Clark, yes. Please be seated. [CLARK *seats himself down left,* HEPPLEWAITE *down right.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. Well, now, what is there in the paint business that interests you?

CLARK [*earnestly*]. I have always found it very interesting that the earliest survivals of the use of paint belong to the Paleolithic age, er—about 50,000 B.C.

HEPPLEWAITE. 50,000 B.C. [*Whistles.*] Well, what do you know about that!

CLARK. The cave dwellers of Spain used three colors, Mr. Hepplewaite. Think of it!

HEPPLEWAITE [*a little vague*]. Very interesting, very interesting indeed.

CLARK. I believe you could improve your advertising by the use of such facts as history provides.

HEPPLEWAITE. Possibly so.

CLARK. Of course the big thing we Cruikshank men want to do in the world is *serve.*

HEPPLEWAITE. Eh? I don't just get that.

CLARK. Service is the big thing in the world to-day. Don't you agree with me, Mr. Hepplewaite?

HEPPLEWAITE [*amused*]. Well, if the paint won't stand the weather of course you lose the customer.

CLARK. It's the spirit of service that wins. Quick and efficient service.

HEPPLEWAITE [*dryly*]. I don't know about that. Sometimes slow drying paints do better in the end. We don't go in much for lacquers. Ever use much paint? Think you could sell it?

CLARK. It doesn't matter what the product is—the man has to sell himself.

HEPPLEWAITE. Well, that's true, of course.

CLARK. Paint is a necessity. Every man, woman and child in the country is a consumer of paint, you might say. They buy *your* paint because you sell *yourself.*

HEPPLEWAITE. You've got some pretty good ideas. [*Rising.*] Suppose I give you a month to convince Birdsall Brothers that my paint will make more money for them than any other paint on the market? Want to try it?

CLARK [*rising*]. Yes, sir. I'll write them to-night.

HEPPLEWAITE [*as they walk toward center back*]. Oh, no! You don't want to write them—see them.

CLARK. All right, Mr. Hepplewaite. I'll call on them. I'll get the order as soon as possible.

HEPPLEWAITE [*laughing*]. All right, young man [*slapping him on the back*], all right. You do that. And send Carter in. [CLARK *goes out and in a moment* JOE CARTER *comes in, center back, hesitantly. He is rather a seedy looking youth, too intense to be well-mannered and too sincere to create an immediate impression.*]

JOE. It's—it's mighty nice of you to let me come down, Mr. Hepplewaite. I'm certainly glad to get a shot at that job. [JOE *seats himself down left and* HEPPLEWAITE *down right.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. You want the job, do you?

JOE [*earnestly*]. I'd like to have it, all right. [*Taking cigar out of pocket.*] Do you smoke, sir?

HEPPLEWAITE [*taking cigar which* JOE *brings over to him*]. Yes, thank you. [*Puts cigar in his mouth, takes it out quickly and places it on table.* JOE *watches him anxiously.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. Now let's see—you're the fellow who worked his way, aren't you?

JOE. Yes.

HEPPLEWAITE. Think it was worth while?

JOE. Oh, yes.

HEPPLEWAITE. Well, what did you do it for? What did you get out of it?

JOE. Oh, you learn a lot of valuable things in college, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. Well, what, for instance? [*Pause.*]

JOE. I guess I might as well tell you the truth, sir.

HEPPLEWAITE. Eh?

JOE. I—I guess the best thing I got out of going to Cruikshank was meeting Mary.

HEPPLEWAITE [*astonished*]. You mean my daughter Mary?

JOE. Yes.

HEPPLEWAITE. Humph! I suppose you learned something about making a living, didn't you?

JOE [*seriously*]. No, Mr. Hepplewaite. You don't learn

how to make a living at Cruikshank. Cruikshank College teaches you to make a *life.*

HEPPLEWAITE. Is that so? And you're interested in my daughter, are you?

JOE. Oh, yes. Very much.

HEPPLEWAITE. Look here, young man, how do you purpose to get on in the world?

JOE. I guess it's like someone said, Mr. Hepplewaite. "If a man writes a better book, preaches a better sermon, makes a better mouse trap than his neighbor the world will make a beaten path to his door."

HEPPLEWAITE [*astounded*]. Well, by gracious! I never heard of a young man starting out in life with an idea like that. Nobody makes a beaten track to any man's door in this day and age unless he *advertises.*

JOE. I—I don't agree with you, sir.

HEPPLEWAITE. How'd you earn your way through school?

JOE. I tended furnaces in the winter, made gardens in the spring and chauffeured in the summer.

HEPPLEWAITE. And met my daughter and gathered a lot of fool ideas in the meantime! [*Rising.*] I don't think there's any use in me giving you a trial, Mr. Carter. Do you know, if I were you, I'd stick to gardening and driving cars. I'm afraid you don't know much about anything else. That mouse trap idea—why, that's the craziest notion I ever heard! Didn't know they taught such clap-trap at Cruikshank.

JOE [*rising*]. Then you don't think I can make a better mouse trap, figuratively speaking?

HEPPLEWAITE. I can't see how I can make use of you in the paint business. And another thing—I don't want any young man who can't make good coming around to see Mary.

JOE [*earnestly*]. I know just how you feel about that. [MARY *enters, center back, hesitantly.*]

MARY. Am I interrupting?

HEPPLEWAITE. No, Mary. We've just finished our talk. I'll say good-bye to you, Mr. Carter. [*They shake hands.*] Get those notions out of your head, young man. Take my advice. [HEPPLEWAITE *goes out center back.*]

MARY [*looking after her father and then at* JOE]. What's the matter with Dad? Didn't it go all right?

JOE. Gee, Mary, I'm awfully sorry, but your father didn't seem to take to me much.

MARY. Why not?

JOE. I don't know.

MARY [*smiling knowingly*]. Joe, have you been telling Dad some of your ideas about life?

JOE. Well, a few of them, maybe.

MARY. Now, Joe, you ought to have known better than that. They're wonderful, Joe, but they haven't anything to do with paint now, have they?

JOE [*looking very straight at* MARY]. I think so, Mary. [JOE *stands lost in thought for a moment.*]

JOE. Mary, I've got an idea. I'm going to make the kind of mouse traps your father understands.

MARY. Mouse traps!

JOE [*taking* MARY'S *hand and speaking feverishly*]. Mary, "if a man writes a better book, preaches a better sermon, makes a better mouse trap than his neighbor the world will make a beaten path to his door!"

MARY. Yes, Joe, I suppose that's perfectly true. [MARY *stands smiling and nodding her head sympathetically as the curtain falls.*]

## ACT II

SCENE—*Same as Act I.*
TIME—*A month later.*

*The girls are playing bridge at a table down center front.* MARY *is seated at the back, facing the audience,* ANN *on her right,* ALICE *on her left and* BARBARA *across from* MARY, *with back to audience.*

*As the curtain rises* MARY *has just finished dealing and the players are arranging their cards. There is silence for a moment.*

MARY. One spade.

ALICE. Two hearts.

BARBARA. Pass.

ANN. By.

MARY. Two spades.

ALICE. Pass.

BARBARA. By.

ANN. You get it, Mary. [BARBARA *places trumps on table,* ALICE *leads,* BARBARA *puts down remaining cards.*]

BARBARA [*rising*]. There. You don't need me with all that help. [*Seats herself down right beside table. Girls play as they talk.*]

ANN [*to* MARY]. Can't you even guess who's going to get the job, Mary?

ALICE. Can't you tell us a thing?

MARY. I don't know any more about it than you do.

BARBARA. I should think you could make your own father tell.

MARY. Oh, I tried hard enough. He just won't discuss it.

ALICE. Maybe neither of them made good.

ANN. I don't see why Horace shouldn't. He's been telling me about a wonderful new plan for selling himself in half an hour.

BARBARA. Selling himself in half an hour!

ANN. Yes. He devotes the first ten minutes to the introduction—creating an interest in himself as an individual, you know. Then he asks the customer to give him some advice.

MARY. Advice!

ANN. Of course. Did you ever see a man who didn't like to give advice?

BARBARA. What happens then?

ANN. Well, he has a nice friendly chat and just at the end, just at the psychological moment when the customer is nice and mellow and sort of oozing human kindness, he asks him for the order. Isn't that clever?

MARY [*doubtfully*]. Has he tried it?

ANN. No, he says it will only work on certain types.

MARY [*smiling*]. I hope he can find plenty of them. I should think they'd have to be rather sentimental types. [*Both girls look at each other and then at* MARY.]

ALICE. Gordon's methods are entirely different. He says you have to use different tactics on each man. It's like a football game. Sometimes you try an end run and sometimes a forward pass. It all depends.

BARBARA. Can't you just see him with one foot on father's chest and a can of Hepplewaite paint rolling between the goal posts?

ANN. I should think he'd miss the cheer leader and the college band!

ALICE [*a little indignant*]. It's the Cruikshank *spirit* that counts.

MARY. Of course it is, Alice, and that's what Dad's interested in. [ALICE *and* ANN *look speculatively at* MARY *again.*]

ALICE. It's a good thing Joe Carter dropped out. Imagine him trying to compete with Horace and Gordon!

ANN. Poor old Joe! He used to come to classes with his face all smudgy from stoking a furnace.

BARBARA. How'd you ever stand it to go out with him, Mary?

MARY. Joe's rather nice when you know him.

ANN. Maybe, but his type never set the world on fire.

MARY [*smiling*]. Oh, you can't tell.

ALICE. Impossible.

ANN. Well, anyway, Mary, we'll know who got the job when your father comes home, won't we?

MARY. Oh, yes. I reminded him this morning that the

month was up and he'd have to tell. [*Telephone rings off-stage. The three girls look up expectantly.*]

ANN. Maybe that's your father on the phone!

ALICE. If it is, ask him!

MARY [*running out, right*]. You bet I will!

ALICE [*putting her cards down and leaving the table*]. I'm simply too excited. I can't even remember what's trumps. [*She seats herself down left.*]

ANN [*leaving table and going down right*]. Neither can I. Did you notice how interested she was in Horace?

ALICE. You heard what she said about Gordon!

ANN. We might just as well tell her, Alice.

BARBARA. Tell her what? [MARY *enters, right.*]

MARY. Imagine calling me up to gossip about the minister's wife!

BARBARA. The minister's wife!

MARY. Yes. Someone found out that she paid fifteen dollars for that good-looking hat she had last winter!

BARBARA. Well, I'm glad one preacher's wife had a decent hat, anyway. What were you going to tell us, Alice?

ALICE. Mary, Gordon and I have been looking at bungalows lately and if he gets this job—

MARY [*rushing over and kissing Alice*]. Alice! Really!

BARBARA. You better let him make good first, Alice.

ALICE. He will.

ANN. And I may as well admit that if Horace gets this job I'll stop looking for a teaching position.

MARY [*going over to* ANN]. Why, Ann! Why, you old darling!

BARBARA. I hope you both wear veils and have orange blossoms. I like a wedding to *be* a wedding.

MARY. Oh, do have a fall wedding, one of you, with barrels of chrysanthemums! Why, I don't wonder you were excited about the job! But I don't understand why you both don't know all about it. Haven't the boys told you how they're getting along?

ANN [*laughing*]. Your father made them promise not to tell women anything about their business affairs.

ALICE. And they've refused to tell us a thing that was actually happening.

BARBARA. You see, you're a bad example, Mary.

MARY [*ruefully*]. But I couldn't help being interested.

BARBARA. And what a bore you've been! Not a word but paint and jobs for a solid month!

ANN [*to* BARBARA]. Well, Barbara, Bob's in the paint business, too.

BARBARA. And look at the gallons of paint that separate us! Anyway, we got some of it on our fence last week and the place doesn't look so disgraceful.

MARY. I'll wager it wasn't Hepplewaite!

BARBARA. Don't mention the loathsome stuff. [HEPPLEWAITE'S *voice is heard off-stage.*] Mary! You home, Mary?

MARY [*calling*]. In here, Dad! [*Girls all turn toward him expectantly as* HEPPLEWAITE *enters, left, carrying his hat and a brief case.*]

HEPPLEWAITE [*jovially*]. Well, what are you all doing here, I'd like to know! Hello there, Barbara.

BARBARA. Hello, Mr. Hepplewaite. [*Getting up.*] Come on over here and talk to us.

HEPPLEWAITE. Oh, no, no. You sit right still. I'm not going to stay.

MARY. You are too. You're going to sit down and be sociable. [HEPPLEWAITE *is propelled into the easy chair, down right.* BARBARA *sits on one arm,* MARY *on the other.*]

ANN. I heard you and Dad beat the club champion last week, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. Oh, say—did we! You ought to've been there. Golf's a great game, a great game. You know when I was a boy that golf course was part of the old McKinley farm and—

MARY. And you used to steal apples from the orchard

and go swimming in the creek and find arrow heads where the club house stands now.

HEPPLEWAITE [*taking it good-naturedly*]. Now, Mary, why couldn't you let me say that?

MARY. Because you're going to tell us about something else.

HEPPLEWAITE [*teasingly*]. Oh, I am, eh?

MARY. What did you promise me this morning?

HEPPLEWAITE. Don't believe I can tell you about that job.

MARY. You can't tell us!

HEPPLEWAITE. Looks now like there might be *two* jobs.

ANN and ALICE. Oh!

HEPPLEWAITE [*taking order blanks out of brief case*]. I can tell you this, though—Cruikshank men are the best there are. You can't beat 'em. [*Holding out orders.*] There's the proof. The proof of the paint is in the orders, eh?

BARBARA. Did they really get Dad?

HEPPLEWAITE. Just take a look in the paint department the next time you're in your Dad's store.

MARY. Now tell us all about it.

HEPPLEWAITE. I told the boys to come up here this afternoon and we'd all talk it over together. Seems to me that Alice and Ann sort of take an interest in those two young men.

ALICE. You're right, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. I thought so. Well, I'm going to give you girls a little advice. Don't mix in business.

MARY. Now, Dad—

HEPPLEWAITE. Now, Mary, don't interrupt. A woman's place is in the home. You stick to bridge and let the men stick to paint. [*Door bell rings.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. There they are. Bring them right in, Mary. [MARY *goes out, left.*] Now you girls sit right here and act as audience. This'll be a good demonstration of

what *business* is like. [MARY *enters, left, followed by* SUTCLIFFE *and* CLARK. HEPPLEWAITE *rises. Girls sit on the edge of their chairs.*]

SUTCLIFFE [*breezily*]. Hello, Alice. [*Nods to the others and goes down to* HEPPLEWAITE.] Good afternoon, sir.

CLARK [*cheerfully*]. Hello! Hello, Ann. How do you do, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE [*coming down to meet boys and shaking hands*]. Well, well, well! I want to congratulate you fellows. [*Boys look at each other in surprise.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. I don't know how you did it. Honestly, I didn't think it was possible. Well, you'll have to forgive an old fellow for that.

SUTCLIFFE. I don't quite understand, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. Why, man, you should understand. You sold Lynch and Palmer, didn't you?

SUTCLIFFE. I sold Lynch and Palmer?

HEPPLEWAITE. Here's the order. Now let's hear how you did it.

SUTCLIFFE. I think there's some mistake about this, sir. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lynch refused to see me. Fact is, he had me put out of his office. [BARBARA *laughs silently. The other three girls gasp.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. What!

SUTCLIFFE. You see, Mr. Hepplewaite, I've about decided that I'd do better in the advertising business. My brother-in-law wants me to go in with him. [*Looking at* ALICE.] There's lots of money in advertising now. [HEPPLEWAITE *looks from one to the other in bewilderment.*]

ALICE. Why, Gordon, that's splendid! [*Laughing.*] After all, you always did give the public what it wanted!

SUTCLIFFE. I certainly appreciate your kindness, Mr. Hepplewaite. I'm sorry I couldn't sell paint but I just didn't seem cut out for it.

HEPPLEWAITE [*trying to collect himself*]. That's all right, Sutcliffe. I—I hope you'll make good in the advertising business.

SUTCLIFFE [*earnestly*]. I think I'll know just how to tackle it.

HEPPLEWAITE [*amused*]. Perhaps you will.

ALICE [*as* SUTCLIFFE *moves up toward her*]. You always could sell ads for the annual, Gordon.

HEPPLEWAITE [*to* CLARK]. What'd you do, boy—sell both of them?

CLARK. Me? Sell both of them?

HEPPLEWAITE [*exasperated*]. You got the Birdsall order, didn't you?

CLARK. No.

HEPPLEWAITE [*stepping back*]. What!

CLARK. You see I haven't had time to perfect my salesmanship methods. And besides, I've just had an offer to teach mathematics in Centerville next year. [HEPPLEWAITE *gasps.*]

ANN. Oh, Horace, how nice!

HORACE. Will you like it, Ann?

ANN. I'll adore it. Faculty teas! and senior picnics!

HEPPLEWAITE. Is this some kind of a joke?

SUTCLIFFE. Mr. Hepplewaite, I haven't had a thing to do with it.

CLARK. I'm sure I can't explain it, sir.

HEPPLEWAITE. Well, there's one thing sure—these orders didn't drop from the sky.

SUTCLIFFE. If you'll excuse us, Mr. Hepplewaite and Mary, I'd like to run Alice up to see a bungalow. I—er—I'm writing some advertising copy on it.

MARY. Of course. You go right along.

SUTCLIFFE. Good-bye, Mr. Hepplewaite. And thanks for the chance. [*They shake hands.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. Good-bye, boy. Good luck to you.

SUTCLIFFE. Anyone else want to go along?

ANN. Wouldn't you like to see the bungalow, Horace?

CLARK. Yes. We ought to be sort of getting ideas. [*To* HEPPLEWAITE.] I'd like to thank you for giving me a chance, anyway, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. So you're going to sell algebra instead of paint?

CLARK. Yes, Mr. Hepplewaite. I suppose even Pythagoras had to sell his theorem.

HEPPLEWAITE [*shaking hands with him*]. Well, I hope you're successful.

CLARK. Thank you, sir. [*The two couples go out, center back, the girls calling good-bye to each other.*]

HEPPLEWAITE [*sitting in easy chair down right*]. I thought I ran a paint concern but I guess it's a matrimonial bureau! [BARBARA *and* MARY *start to fold up bridge table and chairs.*]

MARY. Well, you've still got Barbara and me to dispose of.

BARBARA. And don't forget that I'm the nice clinging vine who doesn't like to mix in business, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. I'll stick to paint! [BOB *enters, left, in great excitement.*]

BOB. What's all this about selling Lynch and Birdsall Brothers?

HEPPLEWAITE [*handing him the orders*]. Look at those. [BARBARA *seats herself down left.* MARY *is up center.*]

BOB. Three gross of enamel! House paint! Gosh!

HEPPLEWAITE. Did you do that, son?

BOB. Who—me? No. I can't believe my eyes!

HEPPLEWAITE. Well, I'm stumped! [*Door bell rings and* MARY *hurries out, left.*]

BOB. Well, Barbara, your father's got Hepplewaite on his shelves, anyhow.

BARBARA. And I guess it's on the front fence, too.

BOB [*sitting on couch beside her*]. What do I care, just so I know which side of the fence *I'm* on? [MARY *reenters, smiling.*]

MARY. There's someone to see you, Dad.

HEPPLEWAITE. Who is it?

MARY. It's a man with a mouse trap.

HEPPLEWAITE. Eh?

MARY. It's a nice young man.

HEPPLEWAITE. I don't want to see anyone. Tell him I'm busy.

MARY. Dad, this isn't your office! Besides, I know it's important.

HEPPLEWAITE. Well, tell him to come in. [MARY *goes out, left, and returns with* JOE CARTER.]

MARY. It's Joe Carter, Dad. You remember Joe.

HEPPLEWAITE [*rising*]. Well, Carter, did you want to see me?

JOE. I—I was going by the house and I thought I'd stop in and ask you something. [*Realizes that* BARBARA *and* BOB *are in the room.*] Hello, Miss Lynch. 'Lo, Bob. I'm not interrupting a tea party, am I?

MARY. No, go right ahead and talk to Dad.

JOE. Well, as I was saying, I wanted to ask you something, Mr. Hepplewaite.

HEPPLEWAITE. Yes? Well, what did you want to know?

JOE. I just wanted to ask you if I could call on Mary occasionally, now. [MARY *beams on* JOE. BOB *and* BARBARA *look on with great interest.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. What did I tell you about my daughter the last time you were here?

JOE. You said I couldn't have anything to do with Mary until I made good.

HEPPLEWAITE. That was a month ago. Do you know how long it takes a man to make good?

JOE. It took me a whole month to even get a look-in.

HEPPLEWAITE. See here. What are you driving at? What have you been doing?

JOE. I just took your advice, sir. I got a job as a gardener and chauffeur.

HEPPLEWAITE. Do you call that making good? Do you think I want gardeners and chauffeurs coming to see Mary?

JOE. But I don't do that any more.

HEPPLEWAITE. Oh, no?

JOE. No. You see, while I was gardening for Mr. Lynch— [BARBARA *starts.*]

HEPPLEWAITE. For Lynch!

JOE. Yes. While I was working for him I got a chance to do a little paint job around his place.

BARBARA. Joe Carter! Was it you who painted that fence?

JOE [*smiling*]. Yes, and I had an awful time keeping out of your way. I'll bet you never spent so much time on the front porch in your life! [*Turning to* HEPPLEWAITE.] I got some of your paint, Mr. Hepplewaite, and used it. By the way, that's mighty good paint.

HEPPLEWAITE. *You* put my paint on Lynch's fence? Well, that's a good one!

JOE. Mr. Lynch and I got to talking about the job and I got a chance to tell him something about your paints. He seemed mighty interested. Wouldn't wonder if he'd buy some.

HEPPLEWAITE. By George!

JOE. Then while I was chauffeuring afternoons for Mrs. Birdsall I managed to get her over to that tea room where they have all that Chinese red furniture and she got the idea of fixing up the porch furniture. Of course, I got some of your enamel and showed her how easy it was to use. She seemed to be real pleased.

HEPPLEWAITE. By George! By George!

JOE [*going on unconcernedly*]. But I've got a real job now, Mr. Hepplewaite. Mr. Birdsall wants to take me in the hardware business. I thought maybe that was enough start to come and see Mary.

HEPPLEWAITE [*going over and putting his hand on* JOE'S *shoulder*]. Look here, Carter, I don't think the hardware business is the place for you. It looks to me like you've got the knack of selling paint. How'd you like to sell Hepplewaite?

JOE. It's not hard to sell, once you've used it. I guess there's nothing I'd rather do, Mr. Hepplewaite. That is, nothing next to coming to see Mary. [MARY *comes down to* JOE.]

HEPPLEWAITE [*shaking hands with him*]. I'll tend to the paint part; you'll have to settle the other with Mary. And, boy, those notions of yours—like that mouse trap idea—you just hang on to them. I can use them in my business.

[CURTAIN]

# THE PERFECT PATTERN *

*A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS*

By

ETHEL VAN DER VEER

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## CHARACTERS

Girls of the Senior Class in Spencerian High School:

GAY FORSYTHE } *competitors for the Valedictory*
MARY BEAL } *honor*
IRENE BIRDSALL
CHARLOTTE GILL
ANNETTE BROWN
PAT CONNORS, *class historian*
DOROTHY CAMERON
ANNA FRANKABADIERO
RUTH-ANN MORELY, *assistant coach*

Boys of the Senior Class in Spencerian High School:

PUDGE DAVIS, *class prophecy*
MILTON SHRAFFT, *salutatorian*
BUD HOWELL
TED ANDERSON
AL JONES, *editor of* School News
CUB TERRISS, *star reporter*

# THE PERFECT PATTERN

SCENE—*The Gymnasium of the Spencerian High School. Tiers of benches rise against the back wall. Entrance, right. Against the left wall are set dumb-bells, Indian clubs, etc., a water-cooler and paper cups. Down left is a mechanical exerciser, down right perhaps a "horse," but these last are not used. The supposition is that the rest of the room and paraphernalia are out beyond the "footlights." The time is a Monday afternoon early in June.*

[IRENE BIRDSALL *and* CHARLOTTE GILL *are seated on the benches, bending over their books and papers.* CHARLOTTE *has a writing tablet on her knee and is chewing the end of her pencil.* IRENE *is muttering a lesson from a book, but appears abstracted.* PUDGE DAVIS *comes in and sits on an upper bench, looking out into the auditorium, but supposedly watching someone exercising. He squints a critical eye at what he sees and wags his head in disapproval, then laughs. The girls pay no attention to him.* IRENE'S *muttering has ceased and after a moment she turns to* CHARLOTTE.]

IRENE. Charlotte! Who do you think will get the Valedictory?

CHARLOTTE [*absently*]. The Valedictory? Oh, why I don't know, Irene. . . . These cube roots—now, two hundred and sixteen—

PUDGE. Six.

CHARLOTTE. Six times six are thirty-six, times six—thanks, Pudge. How did you happen to guess it?

IRENE [*to* CHARLOTTE]. Well, I just feel as if I simply couldn't wait to find out who's to get the Valedictory.

PUDGE. Why? You want it?

IRENE [*shaking her head*]. I want Mary Beal to get it.

CHARLOTTE. Mary Beal isn't one of our crowd.

IRENE. Naturally not—she hasn't the clothes.

CHARLOTTE. And her mother's a dressmaker!

IRENE. Well, my father's a dentist—and I haven't any gold teeth. But I like Mary Beal—somehow.

PUDGE. She's a nice girl—maybe that's why. [ANNA FRANKABADIERO *comes in. She looks at the others and nods to* IRENE.]

ANNA [*to* IRENE]. What's your ambition?

IRENE. What do you mean—what's my ambition?

ANNA. Haven't you heard? That's the latest. Miss Strang is making a canvass of the senior class to find out what everyone's ambition is. You know—not just what you're going to do for a living—your real ambition.

IRENE. Oh! As if we knew!

PUDGE. Or had any.

CHARLOTTE. What's yours, Pudge—to knock or to boost?

PUDGE. Both—like you do at a ball game.

ANNA. Mary Beal's ambition is to be a librarian—I found that out.

IRENE. Yes—we all know that.

CHARLOTTE. But why be a librarian? Why not a teacher?

PUDGE. Why be either? Why not a dressmaker's assistant? "Stitch, stitch, stitch, in poverty, hunger and dirt"—

CHARLOTTE. Going to put that in your Class Prophecy, Pudge?

PUDGE. There'll be plenty of wise-cracks in Class Prophecy, but there won't be any sting in them; there won't any of them hurt.

ANNA. Mary wants to go to college, first.

CHARLOTTE. She'd have to.

IRENE [*to* ANNA]. Yes—we all know that, too.

ANNA. Oh, well—I guess I'll go look for somebody that doesn't know so much as you all do. [*She turns to go.*]

PUDGE [*pointing off right*]. Right upstairs—in the front office. [ANNA *gestures to* PUDGE *as though waving him aside, and goes out.*]

CHARLOTTE. Who was that? I mean who is she?

IRENE. Don't you know? Her name is Anna Frankabadiero.

PUDGE [*to* CHARLOTTE]. Her father's the iceman. Want any ice? [*He laughs.*]

CHARLOTTE. Tell us one of your wise-cracks—so we can all laugh.

IRENE. Yes. And in the Class Prophecy, Pudge, how will we *know* when to laugh? Will you give us a signal?

PUDGE. You'll know when to laugh—when the others do. Want a trial heat? All right, here goes. [*In declamatory manner.*] Miss Charlotte Gill has at length solved her difficulty with cube roots. She plants them in two inches of light sandy loam and lets Nature take its course. There may be a fortune in the idea, if a cubist garden is the result. [*Neither of the girls laugh.*]

CHARLOTTE. Was that a sample?

PUDGE. Well, of course, the more brilliant the subject, the more brilliant the joke.

IRENE. What's your real ambition, Pudge?

PUDGE [*declaiming*]. Mr. Pudge Davis is ambitious to be a lawyer. But indications are that he will probably be a sporting editor, on account of the free tickets to the baseball games. [DOROTHY CAMERON, PAT CONNORS, *and* ANNETTE BROWN *come in and join the little group.* DOROTHY *and* PAT *have their arms about each other's waist.*]

DOROTHY [*to* IRENE]. Heard who will get the Valedictory honor?

IRENE. No, Dorothy. Who?

PAT. I think it must be a close decision, or they'd have announced it by this time.

PUDGE. Might be Milton Shrafft—you girls haven't got *everything* your own way.

DOROTHY. No—Milton Shrafft gets the Salutatory.

CHARLOTTE. Who gets Class History?

DOROTHY. Pat, here.

PAT. I do.

IRENE. I hope Mary Beal gets the Valedictory.

ANNETTE. Not a chance.

PAT [*to* ANNETTE]. You think it will be Gay Forsythe?

ANNETTE. Why not? Who's captain of the girl's basketball team? Who's to play the lead in the graduation play? Who's the school beauty and has the richest father? Who's the best dancer and gets all the boys? [PUDGE *laughs.*] Oh, I don't care what you think, Pudge. I don't like boys, anyway.

PUDGE [*with another brief burst of laughter*]. Funny we never noticed that before, Annette. [BUD HOWELL *comes in.*]

BUD. Hello, Annette—I've been looking for you everywhere.

ANNETTE. You needn't have—I don't go everywhere.

PUDGE [*laughs.*] And only one place at a time.

IRENE. Oh, Bud—your grandfather's on the school board, and it means an awful lot to Mary Beal if she gets the Valedictory. Don't you think it could be fixed—somehow—?

BUD. Not a chance.

IRENE. She can go to college—if she gets the Val—

BUD. She'd have to earn it. It all goes by scholarship—[MILTON SHRAFFT *and* TED ANDERSON *come in.*]

IRENE. Mary Beal has the highest average—

ANNETTE. So had the tortoise—but everybody knows that the hare only needed to wake up.

TED. And Gay Forsythe isn't asleep—if that's what you mean.

CHARLOTTE. You too, Ted Anderson?

PUDGE. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Milton Shrafft.

Everybody salute the Salutatorian. [MILTON *bows,* PUDGE *gives a military salute.*]

OTHERS [*clapping*]. Speech! Speech!

PAT [*to* MILTON]. What's Gay Forsythe's ambition?

MILTON. I don't know—to be a hostess? Or marry a title?

DOROTHY. Well, I must be psychic, because I think Gay wants to go in the movies—I mean the talking pictures, of course. I think that's part of the reason she got the lead in the class play. But then, I think of so many things. I may not say much, but I certainly do a lot of thinking. I'm thinking of something all the time—every minute. You'd be surprised.

PUDGE. Yeah!

IRENE. Do you ever think, Pudge?

DOROTHY. Well, what I think about Gay—

PAT. Gay's all right, only she's been spoiled too much.

ANNETTE [*to* PAT]. Did she ever do anything for you?

CHARLOTTE. Or for anybody else?

ANNETTE. Well, let me know if she ever does. [*She turns to go out, right.*]

BUD [*following* ANNETTE]. Wait a minute, Annette! Are you for Mary Beal, or just against Gay Forsythe? [*But* GAY FORSYTHE *is just coming in. She carries a stenographer's note book and pencil. Hearing* BUD, *she stops short, confronting* ANNETTE.]

GAY. Why are you against me, Annette?

ANNETTE. I'm not against you, Gay. I just think you've got enough—without—

BUD. Without going after the Valedictory, she means.

GAY. I haven't gone after it, Annette. And Bud Howell, you know perfectly well that I never go after *anything.* But what's this about Mary Beal?

CHARLOTTE. Only that she has the highest average—

ANNETTE. So we wondered where you came in for the Valedictory.

GAY. Who told you Mary had the highest—did *she?*

IRENE. No—the editor of *School News.*

GAY [*with a shrug*]. Al Jones isn't always—accurate.

MILTON. Oh, Al's pretty careful what he says.

GAY. If he is, he'd be a good example to follow—wouldn't he?

PUDGE. Ouch!

GAY. But I suppose no editor is really able to mind his own business.

IRENE. It isn't that, Gay, the point is it means so much to Mary. If she gets the honor, she can go to college.

GAY [*mildly interested*]. Why is that? I mean why couldn't she go anyway? [*She goes to* IRENE *and sits beside her on the front row bench.*]

IRENE. Well, it's a long story, but the point of it is this: Mary wants terribly hard to go to college, and her mother wants to send her, but can't afford to. But Mary's Aunt Ida Marvin *can* afford to send her, only she thinks college is all nonsense for a girl.

PUDGE. So between can't and won't—

GAY [*starting to rise*]. I don't think that's very interesting.

IRENE [*pulling* GAY *back*]. Wait a minute, Gay. Here's the joke.

PUDGE. Yes, wait for the joke, Gay. You know how to laugh, don't you? Or don't you? [GAY *turns and gives* PUDGE *a withering look.*]

IRENE [*ignoring the interruption*]. Mary's mother just about shamed her Aunt Ida into sending her. But Aunt Ida isn't exactly soft when it comes to doing what she doesn't want to. So she agreed, but on condition that MARY must first prove that she's worth sending to college.

MILTON. I see. And that's where the Valedictory comes in.

PUDGE. Some sport, Aunt Ida! Takes a fifty to one shot against her niece.

BUD. Looks like Gay's chance to be an unknown heroine. What?

ANNETTE. How about it, Gay? Going to let Mary go to college?

GAY [*rising; angry*]. I think it's the cheapest trick I ever heard of. If Mary Beal has circulated that story so as to put me in this position—

IRENE. She hasn't—she didn't. Her mother merely told my mother, months ago. Mrs. Beal was so sure Mary would win out—she was working so hard. And she thought it was going to be a terribly good joke on Aunt Ida.

GAY [*caustically*]. I see the joke. But I guess Pudge was right—I don't know how to laugh. [*Meanwhile,* ANNA FRANKABADIERO *has come in again. Paying no attention to the others, she goes unobtrusively to the Indian clubs and picks up a pair.*]

TED. Hello, Anna, going to give us an exhibition with the Indian clubs?

ANNA [*laughingly*]. I can't even keep the clubs from knocking together.

PUDGE. I'll tell you how—swing them one at a time.

PAT. Gay Forsythe will show you how—she's our star performer.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, Gay, that'll be a kindness, and it won't deprive you of any honors, either.

DOROTHY. Anna hasn't asked any favors, so I don't see how Gay can refuse.

ANNA. Oh, it isn't that I'm just a fool—I had a broken arm when I should have been learning. [GAY *looks at* ANNA.]

BUD. Hard lines, Anna. Come on, Gay, give her a lesson—be a sport. [GAY *puts her note book on the bench where she has been sitting, goes to* ANNA, *takes the clubs and does a few figures, gracefully. Finishing, she returns the clubs to* ANNA.]

ANNA. Thanks. [*But she is obviously only discouraged by* GAY'S *exhibition, and puts the clubs back.*]

GAY. I can do things myself, but I'm afraid I wouldn't make a very good teacher.

CHARLOTTE. Not your ambition, *is* it, Gay?

GAY. I think you have to have a lot of conceit, to be a good teacher. [*She goes out, forgetting to take her note book.*]

PUDGE [*as she goes*]. Oh, not so much, Gay, not so much.

BOYS' VOICES [*off*]. Hello, Gay! What's the matter, Gay? [AL JONES *and* CUB TERRISS *come in.* OTHER BOYS *and* GIRLS *gather in the doorway.*]

MILTON. Here's Al Jones, now—and Cub Terriss. The Editor and the Printer's Devil.

IRENE. Oh, Al! Didn't you say that Mary Beal had the highest average?

DOROTHY. And if so—

PUDGE [*rising, announcing*]. They're off again!

AL JONES. All such information will be found in the next issue of *School News.*

ANNETTE. Didn't you say that Gay Forsythe was to get the Valedictory?

AL JONES. Such decisions are not in my power. [ANNETTE *takes the seat vacated by* GAY, *first taking up* GAY'S *note book, which she begins to read.*]

CUB. As associate editor, let me state that the powers of the press are limited. It is the business of a newspaper to tell what *has* happened, not what *might.*

ANNETTE [*showing* GAY'S *note book*]. Ha! We didn't find out much from Gay, but maybe this isn't the answer.

IRENE. Annette! That's Gay Forsythe's note book.

ANNETTE. Of course it is. And here's her Valedictory address. Listen: [GAY FORSYTHE *and* MARY BEAL *come in together as* ANNETTE *reads aloud.*] "We are upon the threshold—"

MILTON. Whose threshold?

TED. Gay's threshold, of course.

PUDGE. Hurrah for Gay's threshold! Go on— [ANNA *laughs, then finds a seat.* GAY *and* MARY *have stopped apart from the others and unobserved by them.* GAY *looks*

*from the others to* MARY, *excitedly. She has lost her assurance, seems not to know what to do.*]

ANNETTE [*reading*]. "We are about to step forth into the world and find our places as individuals. Whether we shall slip into some groove already prepared for us and where we will become a dependable but unimportant cog in the machinery of destiny—"

BUD. Who wants to be a cog?

CUB. Second the motion.

AL JONES. All those in favor say aye.

ALL THE BOYS. Aye!

PUDGE. Carried. All the boys want to be cogs. [GAY, *very angry, moves to confront them, her mouth opens to scream her indignation, but* MARY *holds her back.*]

MARY [*to* GAY]. Wait! Leave them to me. [GAY *glares at* MARY, *jerks away her arm, but though her chin quivers with rage, she fails to speak, only swallows hard.*]

ANNETTE [*reading*]. "—or whether we will become a force in ourselves and shape not only our own destiny, but aid in making of the world a better place for the individual—"

MILTON. Three cheers for Nietzsche, Spencer and Spinoza!

THE BOYS. Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!

ANNETTE. Well, it peters out after that. Gay never was strong on composition.

MARY [*taking the note book from* ANNETTE *and returning it to* GAY]. I think you're all perfectly horrid. Of course that isn't at all what Gay will say in her Valedictory address—

ANNETTE [*rising, going to* MARY]. Mary! I'm so sorry —but I couldn't believe—

BUD. Take your medicine, Annette. We're all in wrong.

CHARLOTTE. Mary! Then it's true that Gay.

IRENE [*going to her*]. Oh, Mary—I'm so sorry—

PAT. We're all sorry.

DOROTHY. About your not going to college. [*A bell clangs, off.*]

PUDGE. There's the bell—all ashore who're going ashore. [*There is a general movement of leaving the benches.* PUDGE *gets down and goes to* GAY.] Sorry, Gay, but it's like Bud said. It isn't that we're against you, only we think you can afford to let Mary have the Valedictory. [*But* GAY *makes no sign, just stares straight ahead, her face set and forbidding.* PUDGE *waits a moment, then turns abruptly and goes out.* THE OTHER BOYS *have waited and watched this. Now they also turn to go.*]

MILTON [*on his way out*]. I'll say it was pretty decent of Mary to take on the defense—

AL JONES, BUD and TED. Mary's all right. Sure she is. Everybody's all right.

CUB. Except us—we're perfectly horrid. [*The* BOYS *and* GIRLS *all go out, some of them talking together, some just giggling. Only* MARY *and* GAY *remain.*]

GAY [*angry now at* MARY]. Well, I hope you're satisfied!

MARY. We'll have to work it out—somehow.

GAY. Huh! You've worked it out—beautifully. You got the credit for protecting me, didn't you! I don't need any protection. I could have bitten their heads off—the contemptible things. And you—you're only jealous because you didn't get the honors.

MARY. No, Gay, I'm not jealous. If it were right for me to have the honors, they would come to me in a perfect way—without hurting anyone else.

GAY [*bitterly*]. Oh, if only I hadn't gotten rattled and left my note book—

MARY. Of course you can't use those notes now—

GAY. Of course not! You fixed that—if there'd been any doubt left. [*She laughs unpleasantly.*] No, I'll write something new—something that they can't pull apart and laugh at. [*She laughs again, but as though she were ready to cry.*] I'll find a new *subject.* I'll get a new *theme.* I'll

write something fine and original and *bri-ight.* [*She bursts into tears and goes back to the benches, where she flings herself down sobbing.*]

MARY [*going to her, looking down at her*]. Perhaps I can help you, Gay.

GAY [*shrilly, almost screaming*]. I've racked my brains! I've racked my brains! And that's all I could think of—that's all I could think of! [*She buries her face again and sobs.* MARY *takes* GAY'S *note book from her and seats herself on the bench.*]

MARY. You don't have to have really new ideas, Gay. New angles on old ones will serve just as well—if they're old enough. I've thought of an idea of Plato's, written about 400 B.C., that will be new to lots of people. And you could develop it into a theme. [*She writes in* GAY'S *note book, saying the words aloud as she writes.*] "In heaven there is laid up a pattern (the perfect pattern) which he who chooses may behold and beholding, set his own house in order." We ought all to behold that pattern and cut our lives according to it. That doesn't mean we ought all to be just alike. The perfect pattern will fit every high aim and purpose and ideal. [*She lays the book on* GAY'S *lap.*] See if you can't write something along those lines, Gay. [*But* GAY *does not look up or move, except to take hold of the note book with one hand. After a moment's pause,* MARY *is tempted to put a hand on* GAY'S *shoulder, but refrains, turns and goes out.*]

[CURTAIN]

## ACT II

SCENE—*The same as* ACT I. *The time is the following Friday afternoon. There is to be a rehearsal of the Senior Class play in the Assembly Room, and therefore an opportunity is afforded for the members of the cast to appear in the Gymnasium in the costumes which they*

*will wear in the play, if that is desired by way of additional color and variety in the second act. In any case, it is probable that* GAY, *at least, will wear a new dress.*

[RUTH-ANN MORELY, DOROTHY CAMERON *and* PAT CONNORS *are discovered.* RUTH-ANN *is apart, studying from a pamphlet copy of a play.*]

DOROTHY [*shaking her head*]. Listen, Patricia, I don't want to think any more. Because I'm thinking all the time —every minute. And I suppose I'm psychic, too, because I think of the weirdest things—

PAT. Mercy! [TED ANDERSON *comes in.*]

TED. Hello, Ruth-Ann, I thought the rehearsal was to be in the Assembly Room.

RUTH-ANN. It is. But the Assembly Room isn't open yet.

DOROTHY [*to* TED]. Have you seen Gay?

TED. No, why?

DOROTHY. Why! Well, she hasn't been at school since Monday, and I'm her understudy in the class play. And here it is Friday afternoon and not a word from her. Oh, Ruth-Ann, will you hear me in my part—I mean Gay's part—because if I'm to step in at the last minute—

RUTH-ANN. Last minute—why, you've known right along, since the beginning, that you were to understudy Gay.

DOROTHY. Yes, but I had no idea she'd drop out—

RUTH-ANN. Why don't you call her up and find out if she's ill or anything?

TED. Gay's pretty healthy.

PAT. She must either be ill or very angry—

DOROTHY [*to* RUTH-ANN]. Well, either way, it's pretty important I should know my lines—I mean Gay's lines. If only I'd seen Gay in a rehearsal—I'd maybe know the part from that. But I never thought I'd be needed, so I didn't come, and finding out at the last minute—it's terrible.

TED. Well, don't get excited.

RUTH-ANN. Besides, it isn't really the last minute—yet.

DOROTHY. I think if I could only stop thinking about it— [BUD HOWELL *and* MILTON SHRAFFT *come in.*]

PAT. Oh, Bud—have you heard what's the matter with Gay?

BUD. No. What *is* the matter with her?

DOROTHY. We think she's mad at us. [IRENE BIRDSALL *and* CHARLOTTE GILL *come in, followed by* ANNA FRANKABADIERO, *who pays no attention to the others, but goes unobtrusively to the Indian clubs.*]

IRENE [*to* RUTH-ANN]. Do we rehearse in the Gymnasium?

RUTH-ANN. No, but we can wait here until rehearsal is called. I'll go and see if they're nearly ready. [*She goes out.*]

CHARLOTTE. Where are all the other cogs?

MILTON. They're probably caught in the machinery of destiny.

IRENE. I want to see Pudge Davis.

TED. Oh, he's probably out looking for his place as an individual.

DOROTHY [*to* IRENE]. Have you seen Gay?

IRENE. Has anybody? [ANNA FRANKABADIERO *has taken up a pair of Indian clubs and is now swinging them with ease and grace.* BUD *sees her.*]

BUD [*to* TED, *indicating* ANNA]. Get the picture.

TED. Hello, Anna, where did you learn to swing the clubs? Thought you couldn't keep them apart.

ANNA. Oh, Gay Forsythe's been giving me private lessons. [*All eyes turn to* ANNA, *who is doing very well indeed with the clubs, but who now becomes self-conscious and stops.*]

IRENE. Well, that's the first news we've had of Gay.

CHARLOTTE [*to* ANNA]. You mean to say you've been seeing Gay Forsythe right along—ever since Monday?

ANNA. She sent for me to come to her house.

PAT [*to* DOROTHY]. Well, what do you think of that!

DOROTHY. Oh—if I have to think any more— [AL JONES *and* CUB TERRISS *come in.*]

BUD. Here come a couple of cogs.

IRENE. But unimportant ones.

CHARLOTTE. Yes. Al Jones, here Anna has been seeing Gay all week, and it wasn't even mentioned in *School News* this morning.

MILTON [*to* AL JONES]. What's the matter with your star reporter?

AL JONES. Well, where would you put that item? Under Society News, or under Gossip?

CUB [*speaking generally*]. You might have noticed that there was a full attendance at the Boys' Club Monday evening, and that Pudge Davis was seen alone at the movies Tuesday evening, that Bud Howell—

BUD. Present company is always excepted.

CUB. Correct. And excepting Bud Howell, all the boys have shown a noticeable lack of gayety.

TED. Laugh, Bud, laugh!

AL JONES. Forsooth, it may be that the gay has gone out of gayety. [PUDGE DAVIS *comes in.*]

IRENE. But here comes the boy who can put it back. [*But* PUDGE *simply glares at them sullenly.*]

MILTON. Yes, Pudge, tell us a joke.

PUDGE [*going nearer to* MILTON, *belligerently*]. What kind of a joke?

TED. Something personal.

MILTON. Entitled The Broken Date, or All Alone at the Movies.

PUDGE [*thrusting his face close to* MILTON'S, *pugnaciously.*] Say! How do you get that way!

ANNA [*shrilly*]. Oh! There's going to be a fight! [*There is a general movement and murmurs of* "Oh!" *and* "Oh, stop them!" OTHER BOYS *and* GIRLS *gather in and about the doorway with murmurs and questioning*

*each other, as* "What's up?" *and* "What's it about?," *etc.*]

IRENE. Pudge Davis! Where's your sense of humor?

PUDGE [*sullenly*]. Stuck in a groove. [*He turns away from* MILTON.]

TED. Be a cog, Pudge, be a cog.

BUD. Be a dependable cog.

MILTON [*who has held his ground and returned* PUDGE'S *stare, dusting off his sleeves.*] Well, I won.

PUDGE [*belligerent again*]. Yeah! You can feel proud of that battle—and tell your friends about it.

PAT. Why, Pudge Davis—what's gotten into you? [*The* CROWD *at the doorway, losing interest, are drifting away, off right and* ANNETTE *comes in.*]

ANNETTE [*coming briskly to center*]. Oh, Bud! Get me a glass of water, will you?

BUD. Certainly. [*He goes to the cooler for water.*]

CHARLOTTE. Annette! Have you seen Gay Forsythe?

ANNETTE [*nodding*]. I have.

BUD. Did she see you first?

IRENE. Did Gay speak to you?

CHARLOTTE. Did she cut you dead? [MARY BEAL *comes in. She remains right, at first unnoticed by the others, except* ANNA FRANKABADIERO, *who goes to her.*]

ANNETTE. Wait till I tell you. [BUD *returns and gives* ANNETTE *the cup of water. She drinks.*]

ANNA [*to* MARY]. I hope something will happen so that you can go to college anyway, Mary.

MARY. Yes, I—I hope so. Thank you, Anna. [*All eyes turn to* ANNA *and* MARY.]

ANNA. I'm going, you know. My father said the other day when Gay sent for me to come to her house, that I must go to college and learn all I can. So I'm awfully glad, of course, but I wish you could go, too.

MARY. Thank you, Anna—I'm glad you can go.

ANNA [*going*]. Well, that's all I was waiting for—just to tell you. So I'll go home, now. [*She goes out, right.*]

MARY [*as she goes*]. Good-bye, Anna.

ANNETTE [*handing* BUD *the water-cup*]. Well, can you beat that?

PUDGE. Listen, Mary, wasn't your father a professor or something?

MARY. My father was a doctor of philosophy, but he was only assistant to Professor Coombe— [*She sits on a bench to await rehearsal.*]

BUD. Isn't that the limit? The iceman's daughter goes to college and the professor's daughter stays home.

MILTON. All on the turn of the same card.

AL JONES. That's what comes of our being so funny—with Gay's Valedictory. Somebody might have gotten her to back out, if we hadn't *all* got so funny—

PUDGE. I'm cured. I'll never be funny again.

ANNETTE. Cheer up, Pudge, Gay may not be so angry as you think.

PUDGE. Oh, I don't care about that—it's myself that I'm peeved at. I think I'm smart and go kidding people—

ANNETTE. I started to kid Gay when I saw her just now. I said, "Hello, Gay, how's your threshold?" You know, I thought she'd maybe bite my head off. But if you please, she smiled at me so sweetly and said, "Fine, I'm just crossing it, now." And then she went into Miss Strang's room. She's there now.

TED. What do you know!

MILTON. And butter wouldn't melt in her mouth.

PUDGE [*starting right*]. I'm going to have a little talk with Gay. [*But* GAY FORSYTHE *is just coming in, and* PUDGE *stops.*]

GAY [*as she comes*]. You're going to have a little talk with me, Pudge? What about?

PUDGE. Why—er—if I could see you alone—

GAY. I'm afraid I won't have any time—

PUDGE. Then you're still angry with me?

GAY [*smiling sweetly*]. I'm not angry with *any* of you. I just haven't anything in common with you, that's all.

IRENE. Ouch! [RUTH-ANN MORELY *appears in the doorway.*]

RUTH-ANN. Rehearsal is called in the Assembly Room. [*There is a general movement of preparation to go.*]

DOROTHY [*approaching* GAY]. You know, Gay, I've been thinking—

PAT [*putting an arm about* DOROTHY *and leading her off*]. You'll get a headache, dear. [DOROTHY *and* PAT *go out, following* RUTH-ANN.]

CHARLOTTE. Come on, Irene, we've nothing in common to wait for. [CHARLOTTE *and* IRENE *go out.*]

PUDGE. Well, boys, the fireworks are all over. What's detaining us?

MILTON, BUD and TED. Nothing in common. Not a thing. Let's go. [PUDGE, MILTON, BUD *and* TED *go out.*]

CUB [*to* GAY]. Any statement you wish to make for publication, Miss Forsythe?

GAY [*smiling pleasantly*]. Not any, thanks.

AL JONES [*taking* CUB *along*]. What was it Milton said about butter? [*They go out.*]

ANNETTE. Come on, Mary.

GAY [*sweetly*]. No, please, Annette. I want to speak to Mary a minute before we go in to rehearsal—if you don't mind.

ANNETTE. Oh, very well. [*She goes out.*]

GAY. I've had a talk with Miss Strang and Mr. Owens.

MARY. About the address? Did they like the idea? You're going to use it?

GAY [*shaking her head*]. I told them the whole story—about the threshold and the fun that was made of it. And how you wanted to help me out—with the perfect pattern idea.

MARY. But then, what will you do, Gay?

GAY. I'm really not good at composition, and they both know it. So I let them think I couldn't work out the idea.

MARY. But you must!

GAY. I'll admit I tried to. But, Mary, the more I

thought about it, the more I saw that to use your idea wasn't at all the perfect pattern for me. It got to me—finally. Penetrated, you know. And I saw that the only really right way was for you to use your idea yourself. So I've fixed it that way. [*And as* MARY *starts to speak.*] Don't interrupt! And there's another thing. If for any reason your Aunt Ida should hesitate—about college—you can tell her that there's a scholarship goes with the Valedictory.

MARY. Of course, this is terribly exciting. But, Gay, how is the pattern working out for you?

PUDGE [*appearing in the doorway*]. Come on, you two! You're holding up rehearsal. You can fight it out afterwards.

GAY. We won't have to. We're going to college together. [*They are following* PUDGE *out.*]

[CURTAIN]

# THE LAST VOYAGE OF ODYSSEUS *

*A PLAY IN TWO ACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE*

By

PERRY BOYER CORNEAU

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## CHARACTERS

Odysseus
Penelope
Telemachus
Dolius
Eurycleia
Little Elpenor
Several Boys
Several Girls
A Number of Ithacans

# THE LAST VOYAGE OF ODYSSEUS

SCENE: *An open square before the Palace of Odysseus in Ithaca. The entrance to the Palace is on the right; at the back and on the left are entrances leading to the town and the harbor. Before the Palace stands a curved marble bench.*

*On this bench Odysseus, now a very old man, is seated, with a throng of boys and girls about him. They are listening in open-mouthed wonder to a story he is telling them.*

A BOY.

Oh, King Odysseus, do not stop your story.

ODYSSEUS.

There all the rocks were strewn with wrecks below;
Of many and proud ships that sailed that sea.
For there the luring music led them on,
Until their timbers grated on the rocks,
And sailed the sea no more. But we passed safely.
My men untied me. Then joyfully they plied
The flashing oars. Soon we were far away.
And that is all the story of the Sirens.

A BOY.

Now tell us of the Cyclops—and his cave—

ANOTHER BOY.

Yes, yes, and how he caught and ate your men.

A THIRD BOY.

Yes, tell us how he bit them right in two,
And how the cave was full of human bones,
And how—

A GIRL. Oh, no—oh, no—don't tell us that—

ANOTHER GIRL.

No—tell us of the calm Phaeacian land—
About that place where, sheltered from the wind,
You watched the river flowing to the sea,
And saw Nausicaa and her maidens there.

A BOY.

And is it true that the Phaeacian ships
Have neither sails nor rudders—?

ODYSSEUS. No, nor oars.

You only name the place where you would go;
And swiftly then across the curling sea
They take you quicker than the whistling wind.

A BOY.

Oh, if we only had a ship like that!

ANOTHER BOY.

Wise King Odysseus, let us take a ship
And sail into the waters of the west,
And wander through the world until we see
The gray waves curling on the Scherian beach.
Then we will seek the high palace of their king
And beg of him one of those sailless ships.
He'll not refuse it to great King Odysseus—
And then we'll go in search of all those lands,
The wonderful lands that you have told us of.

ANOTHER BOY.

Yes! Yes! And find the oxen of the sun!

A GIRL.

And hunt the Lotos-Eaters' sleepy land.

ANOTHER BOY.

And fight the cruel Laestrygonian giants.

ANOTHER GIRL.

And seek the isle of Circe.

A BOY. She'll not turn

Us into swine. I'll draw my flashing sword
And threaten her. And then she'll bend
Her trembling knees—

ODYSSEUS. I've not forgot. Her eyes
Were ruinous fires. Her lips were glowing flame.
Her hand, as white as sea-foam, held the cup
Of the dark, magical poison. With my sword
I dashed it to the earth—Then no enchantment
Could daunt the King Odysseus that I was.—
But now I am old, old; and my trembling arm
No longer lifts the sword or bends the bow.—
Now when you pray to the immortal gods,
Pouring libations before the smoky hearth,
Forgetting not the rites due to the gods,
Oh, children, pray that the gods grant to you
The boon of living so, that when you come
Into old age the things that you have done
Will still be pleasurable to call to mind—
For there is little pleasure in old age
Save in recalling what the years have held;
And when the time shall come when you descend
The shadowy hillsides of the land of Death,
To the silent meadows of dim asphodel,
There all the life that there is yours to live
Is but remembering the things you did
In the bright world beneath the living sun.
[*There is a moment's silence. The* CHILDREN *stir uneasily.*]

A BOY.
Will we be old like you?

ODYSSEUS. The gods alone
Know not the touch of age.

A BOY. And will—we—die?

ODYSSEUS.
The gods alone escape the touch of death.

A BOY.
No, for I am going to live as long
As the earth does. There'll be no sun to shine
If I'm not here to see it, King Odysseus.
[DOLIUS, *a man even much older than* ODYSSEUS, *and*

*of smaller stature, enters. The* CHILDREN *greet him with cries of* "Dolius!" *and* "Grandfather!"]

DOLIUS.

Oh, King Odysseus, I have found the ship
You bid me find. It is drawn up on the shore
Near to the Fishermen's Harbor. Two fat oxen
Will buy it from the owner. I have seen him.

[*Exclamations and questions from the* CHILDREN, "A ship?!"]

ODYSSEUS.

Dolius, silence! I have not yet told them.

[*A torrent of questions from the* CHILDREN, "Tell us! Tell us! What is it?"]

DOLIUS.

Why, why not tell them now, O King Odysseus.

[*Cries of* "Tell us! Tell us!" *etc.*]

ODYSSEUS.

Then listen, children. For many and long years
I wandered ceaselessly about the earth.
But that was long ago; and now a yearning
Has come upon me to set sail once more.

CHILDREN.

Oh, take me with you! Let us sail with you.

ODYSSEUS.

And you have often wished to see the things
That I have seen—Well, we have found the ship.
Before the crimson sun has set to-day
I'll sail once more out, out upon the sea.
Dolius, hasten to prepare the ship.
Pay to the owner everything he asks.
And bid him draw the ship down to the sea.

DOLIUS.

Suppose they ask the purpose of this ship?

ODYSSEUS.

We sail to Elis to bring back fat cattle.

DOLIUS.

Odysseus, you are still the wiliest of kings.

[DOLIUS *goes out.*]

BOY [*rapturously*].
To sail out, out into the boundless world!
GIRL.
To meet the Phaeacian maidens on the shore
And sit in King Alcinous' sounding hall!
ODYSSEUS.
Now, children, do not tell a word of this.
My son Telemachus and my good wife,
The wise Penelope, are very watchful.
They think that I am not the man I was
And will not let me go about alone.
[PENELOPE *appears in the door of the Palace and watches* ODYSSEUS *and the* CHILDREN *with suspicion. The* CHILDREN *are gathered close about* ODYSSEUS. *Although she cannot hear what they are saying it is perfectly evident to her that they are up to mischief of some kind.*]
ODYSSEUS.
They would not let me set sail in this ship.
Therefore they must not know.
CHILDREN. Oh, we won't tell them.
ODYSSEUS.
Children, it is to me a marvelous thing
They never will believe the things I tell
About my wanderings about the world.
CHILDREN.
They don't!—But we believe you, King Odysseus.
[PENELOPE *watches them, half in astonishment, half in anger. She beckons; and* EURYCLEIA, *a much younger woman, enters. She starts toward the group; but* PENELOPE *holds her back. Suddenly one of the smaller boys, little* ELPENOR, *looks up and sees his mother,* EURYCLEIA.]
ELPENOR.
Oh, there is Mother!
EURYCLEIA. Yes, she's here! She's here!
[EURYCLEIA *tries to seize* ELPENOR. *The* CHILDREN *move away, leaving her face to face with* ODYSSEUS.]

EURYCLEIA.

I meant no disrespect, O King Odysseus.
[*She draws back.*]

PENELOPE.

Odysseus, you sit here spinning idle tales—
These children have their cattle and flocks to watch—
There are nets to mend; and wood must be brought home.
[*Little* ELPENOR *has been absorbed in listening to* PENELOPE *and has not noticed that his Mother has been cautiously approaching him. All of a sudden she seizes him. She begins shaking him. He howls dolefully.*]

EURYCLEIA.

Did I not bid you this day stay at home?
You must be following the older boys.

ELPENOR.

I—I—I—I don't want to stay at home.
Brother and Sister both came here to listen
To King Odisshus tell about the giants.

EURYCLEIA.

So they are here too talking about giants.
[*She moves threateningly toward the group of* CHILDREN. *There is a cry that* TELEMACHUS *is coming.* EURYCLEIA *and the* CHILDREN *hurry out, followed by* DOLIUS.]

PENELOPE.

You must not, Odysseus, set their minds on fire
By telling them stories of your wanderings.
Those days are over—happily. Many a night
I have lain awake until the crimson dawn
Thinking of you before you sailed to Troy,
And wondering then upon what restless sea
You held your wandering way, or in what land
The cruel gods held you, unmindful of your home.
[TELEMACHUS *comes in.*]

TELEMACHUS.
Father, they say a ship is being launched
By your command—
ODYSSEUS. A ship?
TELEMACHUS. With oars and sail,
Made ready in the Harbor of the Fishermen.
PENELOPE.
A ship, Odysseus!
ODYSSEUS. Why, Telemachus,
Who told you this! Why should I want a ship?
I only want to sit here in the sun
And rest me from my many wanderings.
PENELOPE.
A ship! I feared this. Oh, Telemachus,
Your father is mad for the gray, foaming sea—
TELEMACHUS.
They say you gave command to launch this ship—
ODYSSEUS.
Why, now, I recollect, it seems I did
Give orders for this ship; but I'd forgotten.
PENELOPE.
Stop him, Telemachus; he means to go
Away from me, away from Ithaca,
A weak old man, to wander through the world.
ODYSSEUS.
So it is now as I have always known:
Women are prone to words and not to thought.
Telemachus, as you and all men know,
Elis is famed for cattle. I would send
To barter with the people of that land
And bring some of these famous cattle home.
TELEMACHUS.
Prudently planned.—But whom have you commanded
To sail this ship to Elis, King Odysseus?
ODYSSEUS.
Whatever man it pleases you to choose.

TELEMACHUS.

But why did you say nothing of this ship?

ODYSSEUS.

You are burdened already with too many cares.

TELEMACHUS.

But I am strong enough to bear them all.
When do you purpose to send forth this ship?

ODYSSEUS.

Just at the crimson of to-morrow's dawn.

TELEMACHUS.

To-night then, after the day's work is done,
I shall go throughout the city summoning those
Whom I consider fittest for the task
And bid them gather at daybreak on the beach.

PENELOPE.

And now, Odysseus, you must go within
And take your mid-day sleep. Your couch is ready

ODYSSEUS.

Penelope, you think I am a child.

PENELOPE.

I bade you go—into your room and rest.
Men who are old cannot endure fatigue.

ODYSSEUS.

Why you yourself are almost as old as I,
Penelope—

PENELOPE. Come!

ODYSSEUS. Well, if I must I must.

[PENELOPE *leads* ODYSSEUS *to the door of the Palace and pushes him within. She then turns to* TELEMACHUS.]

PENELOPE.

He grows more headstrong, I think, day by day.
Telemachus, do you suppose he means
To set forth once again about the world?

TELEMACHUS.

No, Mother, he said he means to send this ship
Only to Elis to bring back fat cattle.

PENELOPE.

Yes, so he said; but he is the wiliest man
That ever ruled over a Grecian land.

TELEMACHUS.

But now he is old; his cunning all is gone.
He cannot trick me, Mother; do not fear.

PENELOPE.

You are my son, and more than other men;
But you are not as King Odysseus was,
The heart and mind that overthrew proud Troy.

TELEMACHUS.

But that was long ago. His only thought
Is now of these marvelous stories that he tells
To all the wide-eyed boys of Ithaca,
Of marvels that never happened on this earth,
Of wonders that no man has ever seen,
Of Scylla and Charybdis, Polyphemus,
The Sirens and Circe, and the Land of Sleep.

PENELOPE.

His stories year by year grow stranger still.

TELEMACHUS.

Now, Mother, you must go and take your rest
As King Odysseus is—You, too, are old.

PENELOPE.

I old, indeed! And take a noonday sleep!
Why I must watch the maidens in my chamber
Or they will idle away these daylight hours;
And we shall get no weaving done at all.

[PENELOPE *and* TELEMACHUS *go into the Palace. Immediately from all sides little heads appear, peeking out from the places where they have been hiding and listening; and then cautiously the* CHILDREN *enter, with them little* ELPENOR.]

A GIRL.

Oh, King Odysseus' stories are not true!

A BOY.

Of course they're true; I don't care what they say.

ANOTHER GIRL.

You know, I wouldn't trust Telemachus—

ANOTHER BOY.

Why, all these stories that he tells are true.
Of course they're true. I know they're true.
[ODYSSEUS *cautiously emerges from the Palace. The* CHILDREN *run to him and gather about him.*]

CHILDREN.

Oh, King Odysseus, we are back again!
The ship! The ship! Tell us about the ship!

ODYSSEUS.

Be quiet. Be quiet. Lower your voices, Children.
Telemachus has heard about the ship.
He thinks I'll not set sail until to-morrow—
Indeed, he thinks I am not going at all,
But only sending out the ship to Elis
To bring fat cattle back to Ithaca.

A BOY.

And aren't you going at all?

ANOTHER BOY. You said you would.

CHILDREN.

And take us with you to the Phaeacian land—
And beg a magical Phaecian ship
To carry us about the wonderful world.

ODYSSEUS.

No, listen, I did not say we were not going.
When Dolius comes to tell us all is ready
We'll go down to the ship and sail away.

CHILDREN.

And so you'll take us with you? Me? And Me?
[*Repeated confusedly.*]

ODYSSEUS.

As many of you as the ship will hold—
Such boys of you as are old and strong enough
To help me with the sail and with the oars.

A GIRL.

Just boys?

ANOTHER GIRL. Oh, King Odysseus—
A THIRD GIRL. Not take me!
A BOY.
Girls should remain at home and weave and cook.
A GIRL.
I'd be more use than you upon the sea.
No girl could be as lazy as you are.
Girls should remain at home and weave and cook!!
ODYSSEUS.
On shipboard we can have no one who cannot
Wield the long oar or spread the straining sail.
A GIRL.
Oh, King Odysseus—
ANOTHER GIRL. Must we stay at home?
ODYSSEUS.
You would only be a burden on the ship.
A GIRL.
If you go off and leave me I will tell
Telemachus and Queen Penelope.
ODYSSEUS.
No, no, do not do that. My daughter, listen,
I cannot take one girl and not take all.
And if I took you all there'd not be room
Within our little ship. And there are dangers
Upon the sea, black nights of storm and cloud,
Long days of calm while from a brazen sky
The Archer of Heaven pours his darts of fire
Until the pitch comes oozing from the seams
Of our hot deck.
A GIRL. Well, if we must we must.
A BOY.
We will bring you gifts—strange fruits—and stranger gems—
From lands that smoulder underneath the sun.
A GIRL.
Then we will stand upon the shining beach
And wave farewells to you until your ship
Reaches the meeting-place of sky and water.

ODYSSEUS.

Before we set sail on the gray, foaming sea
We must have provision for our voyaging,
Oars, sails, and stores of food, and dry, warm clothing,
And water in huge jars, fresh, wholesome water,
For sea water is full of loathsome salt.
Now we will separate and go throughout
The city, with swiftness and with secrecy,
Making all ready, each one to his task.
Now which of you will make this voyage with me?
[*All the* BOYS, *including little* ELPENOR, *step forward, crying* "I." ODYSSEUS *notices little* ELPENOR.]

ODYSSEUS.

What boy is this? Do you too mean to go?

A BOY.

Oh, he's my brother. Let him stay at home.

ELPENOR.

No! No! I want to go!

A BOY [*shaking* ELPENOR.] You cannot go.

ODYSSEUS.

No, he is much too small. We cannot take him.
The shadows lengthen. We have much to do.
Come. As we go along I'll tell each of you
Just what he is to get.
[*They start to go out.*]

ELPENOR [*shouting angrily.*] I want to go!

[ELPENOR *tries to follow them. His brother drives him back. All go out except* ELPENOR. *Little* ELPENOR, *left alone, hides his face with his arm and howls dismally. After a few moments, during which* ELPENOR'S *howls grow louder and louder, his mother* EURYCLEIA, *enters. She runs to him and seizes him by the arm. He pays no attention to her, but continues his wailing.*]

EURYCLEIA.

Oh, little Elpenor—Mother's dearest child—
Oh, has he fallen down and hurt himself?

[ELPENOR *continues his howling, now a dismal monotone, and does not answer.*]

EURYCLEIA.

Has some dog bitten him? Or has some wicked boy
Thrown stones at him, or punched his precious head?
[ELPENOR *continues his howling and does not answer.*]

EURYCLEIA.

Elpenor, what's the trouble? Speak to me!
[*She shakes him vigorously. He stops howling.*]

ELPENOR.

They've gone away and left me here alone.
[*He begins to cry again.*]

EURYCLEIA.

Who's gone away and left you?

ELPENOR [*howling.*] They! They! They!
[*He begins to cry again.* EURYCLEIA *shakes him.*]

EURYCLEIA.

Answer me now! Elpenor! Who are "they"?

ELPENOR.

Brother and Sister and old King Odysseus.

EURYCLEIA [*shaking him again.*]

Your brother and your sister, where are they?

ELPENOR.

They wouldn't take me with them!!

EURYCLEIA.

Where? Where? Where?
[ELPENOR *howls dolefully and does not answer.*]

EURYCLEIA.

Answer me! Speak!
[*She shakes him again*].

ELPENOR.

They are going to see the giants.

EURYCLEIA.

May the kindly gods protect us all from harm!

ELPENOR.

They said I was too young and much too small
To go with them. I'm not! I'm not!! I'm not!!!

EURYCLEIA.

Tell me, where have they gone?

ELPENOR. To see the whirlpool,

And the woman who changes men to squealing pigs.

EURYCLEIA.

My children changed to squealing pigs! OH! OH!!

ELPENOR.

Oh, yes, they're getting ready a big ship,

Down in the Harbor of the Fishermen.

EURYCLEIA [*calling frantically*].

Queen Penelope! King Telemachus!

[*She clasps* ELPENOR *in her arms and wails aloud.* ELPENOR *begins to howl again.* PENELOPE *and* TELEMACHUS *enter in haste, followed by a crowd of attendants and parents of the children.*]

TELEMACHUS.

Speak! Who appeals to King Telemachus?

PENELOPE.

What sound of wailing strikes upon my ear?

EURYCLEIA.

Alas! Alas! My children, oh, my children!

TELEMACHUS.

Speak, have they perished by the unsparing sword?

EURYCLEIA.

No. They have taken ship and sailed away.

ELPENOR.

And wouldn't take me with them. And they're gone

To see the one-eyed Cyclops in his cave.

EURYCLEIA.

And they'll be changed to pigs, to squealing pigs!

PENELOPE.

Telemachus, I warned you. He has gone

To sea again. I told you he deceived you.

He is the wiliest of Achaian men.

TELEMACHUS.

The ship that sails to Elis with the dawn—

PENELOPE.

He has deceived you. Hasten to the shore.
Perhaps it is not yet too late to stop them.

TELEMACHUS.

With winged feet I hasten to the harbor.

ELPENOR.

They have not gone down to the harbor yet.

TELEMACHUS.

Then quickly tell us, child, where are they now?

EURYCLEIA [*shaking* ELPENOR].

The King Telemachus is speaking to you.

ELPENOR.

They've gone about the town to get supplies;
And they'll meet here before they go to sea.

TELEMACHUS.

Then we shall catch them. Mother, keep wateh here,
While I go to the port to station guards
To see that no man sets sail in the ship.

[TELEMACHUS *goes out.* PENELOPE *goes into the Palace. The Crowd disperses.* EURYCLEIA *takes little* ELPENOR *by the arm, and, shaking him and pulling him, leads him off.*]

[END OF ACT ONE]

## ACT II

SCENE: *Same as preceding act, about two hours later. In the middle of the act the sun begins to redden; at the end it begins to grow dark.*

[TELEMACHUS *enters. He is warm and tired. He sits down and fans himself.* PENELOPE *enters from the Palace.*]

PENELOPE.

You have returned, Telemachus! What news
Do you bring with you? Did you meet Odysseus?

TELEMACHUS.

I found him nowhere. But I stationed guards
About the ship.

PENELOPE. But little good in that
If King Odysseus bade them disobey you.

TELEMACHUS.

Have they returned, my father and the children?

PENELOPE.

I've watched and waited; but they have not come.
Telemachus, now I begin to fear
He has outwitted us.

TELEMACHUS. You do not think
He would entice the guards to leave the ship.

PENELOPE.

Telemachus, he was the wiliest man
Of all that host that sailed to war on Troy.
And there were many who for craftiness,
Wisdom, and skill, and learning were renowned
Above all other men who ever lived.

TELEMACHUS.

What had I better do?—They're coming! Listen!

PENELOPE.

Yes, here Odysseus comes. Telemachus,
Hide here and unseen listen to their plans.
[PENELOPE *goes into the Palace.* TELEMACHUS *hides.* ODYSSEUS *enters. The* CHILDREN *follow him, quietly and cautiously. They are in a state of great excitement.*]

ODYSSEUS.

My comrades, are we ready for the sea?

CHILDREN.

Yes. We are ready. Yes. I have an oar.
I have a fish net. I have sweetened cakes.

ODYSSEUS.

Conceal them quickly. Hide them. Anywhere.
Lest someone come upon us suddenly.
[*The* CHILDREN *conceal the various things they have*

*brought, in their garments or underneath the bench.*]

ODYSSEUS.

The afternoon is waning. We must be
Well out to sea before the night comes down,
Lest in the darkness we run upon the shore.

A BOY.

Come, King Odysseus, come. The dark blue waves
Are fretting and dancing, oh, so restlessly,
To bear us out to the Phaeacian land.

ODYSSEUS.

We must wait here until old Dolius comes.

ANOTHER BOY [*dancing with excitement.*]

The Sirens! Will we hear the Sirens sing?
[*The sky begins to redden with sunset.*]

A THIRD BOY.

And can we go to Agamemnon's land
And see the ruler of the hosts of Greece?

ODYSSEUS.

Alas, alas, I am the only one
That lives of all the leaders of the Greeks.
[*Several of the* GIRLS *enter.*]

A GIRL.

We have come to say good-bye and wish you fortune.

ANOTHER GIRL.

We shall stand watching you upon the beach
Until your ship's wide sails are small as wings
Of sea gulls wheeling to the rim of the sea.

A BOY.

What will our parents say when we have gone?

ANOTHER BOY.

Oh, they'll not care, if we're with King Odysseus.

A BOY.

You didn't tell them, did you, you were going?

ANOTHER BOY.

Oh, no, I did not. I thought the surer way
Would be to send them word when we had gone.

A Girl.

When we have watched your ship well out to sea
Then we will go to all your homes and tell them
That you have gone away with King Odysseus.

Odysseus.

Be careful to say nothing till we go.
I would not have Telemachus find it out.
He and his mother think I am so old
That I'm a child again. But I will show him
That I am clever enough yet to outwit him,
And that my arm is not too weak with age
To guide a dark-prowed ship across the sea.

[Dolius *enters. As they turn to greet him* Telemachus, *unnoticed, slips from his hiding place and enters the Palace.*]

Dolius.

All things are ready; and the ship awaits;
And a strong breeze is blowing out to sea.
A fine thing surely it will be once more
To feel beneath my feet the bounding keel,
And taste the salt spray dashed upon my face.

Odysseus.

Dolius, I do not think one old as you
Is fit to stand the rigors of the sea.

Dolius.

You are not going to leave me here at home? ! !

Odysseus.

An aged man should be content at home.

Dolius.

You call me aged! Why, how old are you?

Odysseus.

You were an old man when I was a boy.

Dolius.

I intend to take this journey with you.
You would not take me when you went to Troy.
And I have scarcely stirred from Ithaca
My whole life long. And if I do not make

This journey with you now Telemachus
And Queen Penelope shall know your plan.

ODYSSEUS.

No, no—

A BOY. Oh, King Odysseus, let him go—

ANOTHER BOY.

Night comes on fast—

A THIRD BOY. Let us hasten to the beach.

ODYSSEUS.

Come, Dolius, then, go with us. But keep silent.

DOLIUS.

So now to see new peoples and new lands!

A BOY.

I have a sword. I'm going to kill the giants.

ODYSSEUS.

Now to the shore to board our dark-prowed ship!

GIRLS.

Farewell! Farewell! Poseidon prosper you!

ODYSSEUS. Once more Odysseus the Wide-Wanderer!

[*They move off with shouts, but stop when suddenly confronted by* TELEMACHUS *who comes out of the Palace.*]

TELEMACHUS [*in a matter-of-fact way, as if he had noticed nothing of what is going on*].

Father Odysseus, the chill of evening strikes
The darkening earth. And now the time for sleep
Creeps fast upon us.

[PENELOPE *and* EURYCLEIA *enter from the Palace.* PENELOPE *carries a cloak. A crowd of Ithacans, including the parents of the various children, enter on the other side. The parents single out their respective children and either seize them or attempt to seize them.*]

PENELOPE. I have brought your cloak,
Odysseus, and have sought the city for you.

ODYSSEUS [*somewhat embarrassed, taking the cloak*].

There is a little chilliness in the air.

TELEMACHUS.

I have sent down the men to man the ship
That sails for Elis at to-morrow's dawn.

ODYSSEUS.

Telemachus, I will not deceive you longer.
That ship I had made ready for myself,
To bear me out again into the world,
To bring me to the wonders of the earth—

A BOY.

Yes, and to find the oxen of the sun—

ANOTHER BOY.

Perhaps to seek the far Hesperides—

A THIRD BOY.

And then to sail and sail into the West,
There where the wine-dark streams of Ocean curl
About the world, and find the sleeping sun.

TELEMACHUS.

See with what folly you have filled their heads,
Father Odysseus. Now, enough of this!
You parents take these children to their homes.
And, Father, you—the time for sleep has come—
Old age cannot endure too long a day.

ODYSSEUS.

Hearken, Telemachus, Dolius and I,
And these brave boys intend to sail the sea.
We are not needed in the workaday world.
My days of battle and of work are over;
The boys' have not begun. There's time enough
In life to shut out dreaming. Let us have
The few short days that there are left to us
Before my silent foot-steps brush the wan
And sunless asphodel meadows of the dead,
Before these boys feel manhood come upon them,
And the hard facts of living dull their souls
To all the glory and wonder of the world.
[*His voice grows stronger and his bearing more commanding.*]

I am the King Odysseus. I was one
Of those famed warriors that humbled Troy—
Achilles, Agamemnon, were my friends—
I am the King Odysseus! Back!—Stand back!
Who dares to interfere with my royal will?!
Telemachus, I am your king and father—
Penelope, the husband rules the wife—
And you of Ithaca, I am your king—
I say that I take ship, and these boys with me.
[TELEMACHUS, PENELOPE, *and the rest of the older people draw back submissively. The* BOYS *surround* ODYSSEUS *and* DOLIUS.]

A BOY.

Oh, King Odysseus! Out into the West!

ODYSSEUS.

Once more—once more—Be favorable, O gods!
[*To one of the* BOYS.]
Give to my hand that oar that steers our ship.
[*The* BOY *hands him a large oar.*]

ODYSSEUS [*taking the oar*].

They make them heavier than in my young days.
[*The oar is too heavy for him to handle. He lets it fall and stands silent as he realizes for the first time that he really is old and weak.*]

ODYSSEUS.

Oh—fool—oh, fool—Old man, you once were wisest
Of all the crafty Greeks. Odysseus, you
Are old now, old, too old to bend an oar;
You cannot sail a ship across the sea—
The night wind breathes upon me. It is chill—chill—
Give me my cloak and let me seek my couch
Near to the glowing embers on the hearth.

A BOY.

Then we shall never reach the magic land—

ANOTHER BOY.

The gray waves curling on the Phaeacian beach—

A Third Boy.

The Streams of Ocean and the western sea—

Odysseus.

The world grows old and changes. Never man
Shall see again the things that I have seen.

Penelope.

Odysseus, come; upon the hearth the fire
Lightens and leaps. And warmth and savory steam
Make cheerful the cold evening. Come, Odysseus.

Odysseus.

O Ithacan people, I that was once your king,
I that was once Odysseus, say farewell—
Only an old man now—a memory—
Only a name that's whispered to the wind—
And you, O children, think what I have been
And know in your brave hearts that you may be
As much or more than I. The morning sun
Has risen many times on Ithaca;
And many times will rise as bright again
When I am treading the quiet hills of Death.
The gods have given me many and high deeds to do;
And I have many lands and wonders seen
But worlds I could not reach are yours to reach;
Things that I could not do are yours to do.

A Boy.

Odysseus, King Odysseus—

Telemachus [*supporting* Odysseus].

Father, come.—

[Odysseus, Penelope, *and* Telemachus *go into the Palace. The rest stand in the waning daylight watching them in silence, some with hands stretched out as in supplication. The scene grows dark.*]

[end of the play]

# BELOVED, IT IS MORN *

*A FANTASY IN ONE ACT AND THREE SCENES*

By

ADELAIDE C. ROWELL

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## CHARACTERS

The Girl
The Boy
The Woman
The Poet
The Traveling Shoemender

# BELOVED, IT IS MORN *

## Scene I

Time—*Noon of a day in June.*

Scene—*A charming bit of woods decked in the fresh green of early summer. A very peaceful spot it is, with the pine needles soft beneath one's feet, and a faint sound of running water falling pleasantly upon the ear. Sitting crosslegged upon a mossy spot, and leaning against a gnarled tree-trunk, we come now upon an odd-looking old chap engaged in mending a pair of farmer's shoes. He is small and shrunken, with a puckered face and shrewd grey eyes that twinkle like "stars upon a frosty night." He is dressed in rusty corduroy jacket, pants and gaiters, and a small, round hat is perched jauntily upon his sparse grey hair. He whistles softly as he works away right deftly: but soon we lose interest in him for there comes to us the sound of laughing young voices, mingled with a touch or two on some stringed instrument, and a boy's voice singing the opening bars of "Beloved, it is morn." He is lingering fondly over what seems to be a favorite note, as he and the* Girl *saunter in upon the scene. They are about of an age, one would surmise—twenty, perhaps. He is a tall, handsome young fellow with a straightforward gaze. In spite of his white flannels, and his display of youthful spirits, one feels instinctively he is prone to take himself and the rest of the world rather seriously. She carries an unconscious beauty, with the same frank look as his, though showing a keener sense of humor. You will like him at*

*once; and man or woman, you will not be able to resist her. She is strumming an accompaniment to his song on a ukulele, and as they enter she breaks off into a sudden burst of youthful laughter.*

GIRL. But this isn't morn, silly! Why are you singing that now?

BOY [*sentimentally*]. Because it is our very own song.

GIRL. But it's noon. [*He catches her lightly by both shoulders, and when they look into each other's eyes it is plain they are head-over-heels in love.*]

BOY. Dear heart, it is morning for me whenever you are around.

GIRL [*pulling away from him teasingly*]. Yes, I know—and you spell it m-o-u-r-n-i-n-g.

BOY. Darn you! [*He darts after her, she dodges him, but soon he catches and kisses her.*]

GIRL. Stop that, Boy!

BOY. I'd like to know why? Aren't you mine?

GIRL. I should say not! There's many a slip—you know.

BOY [*a little hurt*]. But, dear, you said you loved me.

GIRL. Oh, that was yesterday!

BOY. Stop teasing, please. This thing is awfully serious. You really do mean what you told me?

GIRL [*slipping a hand fondly on the back of his neck*]. Of course I do. Can you see anything but love in my eyes?

BOY [*looking deep into said eyes*]. My beloved . . .

GIRL. *My* beloved! [*Here the little* SHOEMENDER *has stood all he can, and he coughs gently and almost humorously. The two lovers spring apart, and when they see the third party, and realize he has witnessed all, they are cruelly embarrassed, and turn many shades of crimson.*]

BOY. Great heavens!

GIRL. This is awful!

BOY. I—I beg your pardon. We didn't see you. [*But the little man's face lights up with a shrewd friendliness*

*that reassures them at once that they have stumbled upon an understanding spirit.*]

SHOEMENDER. Oh, don't mind me, young folks. I've seen so many lovers in my time that they can't show me anything new. [*A quickly exchanged glance tells that they like this queer little man.*]

BOY [*laughing*]. Well, anyway, you're a good sport. But tell me, where did you see all these—lovers?

SHOEMENDER. Wherever I went.

BOY [*seriously*]. You didn't think they were foolish, did you?

GIRL [*with a twinkle*]. Or silly?

SHOEMENDER. Oh, sakes no! They were mostly terrible solemnlike.

BOY. It is solemn sort of—isn't it?

SHOEMENDER. So they all acts.

GIRL [*sitting on a log and facing him*]. Why is it so solemn?

SHOEMENDER [*looking her over approvingly*]. If I was a man, Miss, as was after you, it'd make me solemnlike and uneasy if I saw any other man hanging around you.

BOY [*grinning*]. I am, by heck!

GIRL [*laughing*]. Shoemender, you're a flatterer!

SHOEMENDER. Oh, no, Miss. I've seen too many lovers to let you out of my sight if you was mine.

GIRL. And how about him? What if some girl . . . some woman? . . .

SHOEMENDER. That happens too, Miss. Men's awful fickle, and he's the kind the women runs after.

BOY [*self-righteously*]. Well, they'll have to do some tall running if they get me.

SHOEMENDER. They can if they wants to.

BOY. But you don't understand about us. We are not that kind, are we, dear?

GIRL. Of course not. Why, we have loved each other for nearly two years.

BOY [*seating himself on the log beside her, and speaking with engaging frankness*]. It looked like we loved each other the minute we first came together. You remember, don't you?

GIRL [*with the same frankness*]. As if I could forget!

BOY. And that was months ago.

SHOEMENDER. Remarkable!

BOY. It is wonderful.

GIRL. It has changed everything for us both.

BOY. I was getting so restless.

GIRL. I was bored—I didn't know what I wanted.

BOY. And now . . . [*Sighs and looks happily into her eyes.*]

GIRL. And now . . . [*Sighs and looks happily into his eyes.*]

SHOEMENDER. Was you thinking of getting married, you two? [*They become very serious.*]

BOY. We want to more than anything in the world.

SHOEMENDER. Folks object?

GIRL. They—they think we are too young. Isn't that silly. We are twenty, and Mother was two years younger than that when she married.

SHOEMENDER. Aye, and I take it she learned a few things in them two years.

GIRL. She says times have changed.

SHOEMENDER. They most generally do.

BOY. And Dad says I must go on and finish college before I can think of marrying.

GIRL. That is two years!

BOY. We'll be twenty-two!

GIRL. Mother says maybe we won't want each other by that time.

SHOEMENDER. And maybe you won't.

BOY [*rebuke in his tone*]. You don't understand these things. I am a man who loves once and forever.

GIRL. We grow closer to each other all the time. [*The little* SHOEMENDER *takes mental note of the fact that this*

*has become literally true during the past few minutes; and his eyes twinkle to see them now close together, whereas, they had started out with several feet of log between them.*]

SHOEMENDER [*dryly*]. So I perceive, Miss.

BOY [*manfully*]. And we are going to marry the minute I get out of college.

GIRL [*her eyes alight*]. We've planned the dearest home . . .

BOY [*proudly*]. Just right for the two of us.

SHOEMENDER. A nest, eh? [*They blush, but meet his shrewd gaze with frank eagerness.*]

GIRL. Yes—all snug and cozy.

BOY. With eaves and vines . . .

GIRL. And a livingroom with a broad fireplace . . .

BOY. And low beamed ceilings . . .

GIRL. And windows that open outward . . .

BOY. Where you can stand and watch the sun go down, dear.

GIRL. No, dear—where I can stand and watch for you.

BOY. And your face will be the first thing I see when I make the last turn in the lane—

SHOEMENDER [*nodding wisely*]. Oh, of course, there'll have to be a lane with a turn to it.

BOY *and* GIRL [*laughing*]. Of course!

SHOEMENDER. And a rose-trellis for the birds to sing in.

GIRL [*happily*]. How did you know?

SHOEMENDER. And a tree just outside the window where the birds can build their nests.

BOY [*delighted*]. Have you ever been in love, Shoemender?

SHOEMENDER. I am now.

GIRL. Why, Shoemender, do you mean it?

SHOEMENDER. Aye, I am always in love when I see two young folks with the light of love shining in their eyes for all the world to see.

BOY. Well, why should we be ashamed of it?

SHOEMENDER. Why, indeed?

BOY [*his eyes fondly on the* GIRL]. I don't care who knows I love you, my beloved.

GIRL [*softly*]. Nor I, my beloved. [*But hark! There is a sound of laughter and approaching footsteps. The lovers draw apart, and appear annoyed at the intrusion.*]

BOY. Someone is coming! Why can't they let us alone?

GIRL. Bother! I wonder who it is.

SHOEMENDER. The World, maybe, coming to see if it's true what you say about not caring who knows you are in love.

BOY. Let them come on then.

GIRL [*wistfully*]. But we were so happy.

BOY. They will go soon, dear heart.

GIRL [*smiling*]. And we'll be happier than ever.

SHOEMENDER [*softly*]. I wonder. [*They turn startled faces upon him.*]

GIRL. Shoemender, what do you mean?

BOY. Come, man, tell us! [*But ere he can answer the peace of the whole scene is shattered beyond repair by the entrance of two intruders. They are very peaceable-looking people, this man and woman. They are both well along in their thirties; though they might easily pass as being in their late twenties, so youthful and well preserved is their bearing. He is handsome in his light flannels, and we see in him a charming genius and polished man of the world. The* GIRL *takes note of this at first glance, and one might think that the* BOY *would be jealous; and so he would be were he not so occupied in drinking in the beauty of the* WOMAN *standing so near to him. She is slender and graceful, with a charm and poise of manner, and a birdlike note in her voice that fill the* BOY *with wonder and delight. At sight of the lovers the intruders pause and survey the little group with a charming interest that brings the two young people to their feet in happy confusion.*]

POET [*delicately*]. Ah, do we intrude?

WOMAN [*a merry eye upon the* BOY]. You looked so happy . . .

POET. So snug and apart from the world.

GIRL [*brightly*]. But you see we had a chaperone. [*Indicating the* SHOEMENDER, *who is now busily at work again. The* POET *flashes a smile at the* GIRL.]

POET. How proper!

BOY [*boldly*]. Oh, he just happened.

WOMAN. So did we.

GIRL. We'll share him with you.

POET. By Jove, I like you!

WOMAN. What, are you going to desert me for the first nymph you meet in the woods?

BOY [*gallantly*]. If he does I'll take care of you.

WOMAN [*to* POET]. What do you think of that for a real man?

POET [*to* GIRL]. And what do you think of that for a fickle lover?

GIRL [*loyally*]. What else could he say?

WOMAN [*laughing*]. You are a dear! [*To* BOY.] Shall we see you at the dance at the hotel to-night?

BOY. Indeed you shall!

POET [*to* GIRL]. Then I shall claim a dance from you, my little wood nymph.

WOMAN. Watch him, Boy! He is a poet and all poets are dangerous.

BOY [*flushed and eager*]. But you—you'll let me have a dance?

POET. Aha, my young charmer! [*To* GIRL.] Watch him, my dear! She is a woman, and all women are dangerous.

WOMAN. Come, we must be getting on. We have interrupted the course of true love long enough.

POET. So we have. [*As they move away he calls back.*] But you'll remember about the dance?

GIRL [*flushed and elated*]. Indeed I shall!

BOY [*taking a step after* WOMAN]. And you'll not forget me to-night?

WOMAN. Not I, my young cavalier. Good-bye!

POET. Good-bye, young love!

GIRL. Come back! [*They are by now out of sight, but their voices come back to us pleasantly musical:* "We will!" *In silence the* GIRL *and* BOY *stand looking after them, and when they turn and look at each other once more one may sense the fact that something intangible has happened to them. They sigh, but not for love. It is more the result of a let-down feeling after undue elation. The fine frenzy has faded from their eyes, and some of the delicate bloom has been washed from the cheeks of young love.*]

GIRL. Isn't he wonderful! [*And we see in her eyes that the* BOY *looks a bit crude after that polished product of the world.*]

BOY. Did you ever see anything as beautiful as she is! [*And there is something almost critical in the glance he bestows upon the* GIRL.]

GIRL. And he's so clever—and grace itself!

BOY [*head thrown back and eyes shining*]. That voice of hers—I could listen to it forever!

GIRL. I wonder if they are married—

BOY. Great heavens, I hope not! She's much too good for him!

GIRL [*with some heat*]. Why, he's lovely—a perfect god!

BOY. Oh, slush!

SHOEMENDER. And how about that little home you two were planning a while ago. [*They had forgotten about him, and at his speech they turn upon him, startled and annoyed.*]

BOY [*abruptly*]. What do you mean?

SHOEMENDER. Ah, now, don't tell me you have forgotten about the snug little nest you're to live in some day when the two of you are married?

BOY [*nettled*]. Oh—why no . . . of course not.

GIRL [*with an effort*]. I should think not. [*But the fine flavor of their enthusiasm has grown tasteless.*]

SHOEMENDER. Tell me some more about it.

GIRL [*laughing and matter-of-fact*]. Not now, Shoemender. It's too hot.

BOY. It is hot. Let's go back to the hotel.

GIRL. Let's do. I think I shall take a nap. [*As they move away he proposes almost dutifully.*]

BOY. Shall we come back to-night—there will be a moon?

GIRL [*absently*]. All right.

BOY. I'll meet you here then?

GIRL [*trying to brighten*]. That will be fun.

BOY. After the sixth dance—

GIRL. The sixth?

BOY. Yes—the sixth.

GIRL. I'll be there . . . [*adding with a smile*] beloved. [*Both burst out laughing, he throws his arm carelessly about her shoulders, and as they pass out we hear his fresh, young voice borne back to us with the message:* "My beloved!" *The little* SHOEMENDER *looks after them, chuckles audibly, and then returning to his work, he sings in a quavering yet not unpleasant voice.*]

SHOEMENDER [*singing*].

> All went well wi' my true love and I,
> Till one day Life came a-riding by—
> Life so handsome and bold and free—
> Then all went ill wi' my true love and me.

## SCENE II

TIME—*Ten o'clock of that night.*

SCENE—*The same. A full moon makes the wooded spot almost like day, save for the deeper shadows and the mystic silence of the night. The faint sound of running water still greets our ears quite pleasantly, and now and again there is wafted to us strains of sprightly music, and we know that the dance is on at the hotel near by. When our eyes become accustomed to the*

*scene, we notice the old* SHOEMENDER *asleep under a tree. But he is not long to enjoy his quiet rest, for we hear a hasty step, and now the* BOY *steals in with quick, stealthy tread. Looking around anxiously, he calls out softly.*]

BOY. Beloved! [*No answer, and our young friend seems annoyed—one might almost say, conscience-stricken.*] Oh, beloved! [*Stops and listens.*] Not here! By heck, if that isn't nerve! Said she'd be here after the eighth dance, and here I am—was having the time of my life, too. This is a rotten way to treat a fellow! [*By this time the* SHOEMENDER *is wakened from his slumbers, and sits up, rubbing his eyes.*]

BOY [*startled*]. Hello! You still here?

SHOEMENDER. I am.

BOY. Great day! Do you sleep here?

SHOEMENDER. It's as good a place as any.

BOY. Huh! All a matter of taste. Say, have you seen anybody around here recently?

SHOEMENDER. No—not anyone.

BOY. That's funny . . . darned funny!

SHOEMENDER. Was you looking for somebody?

BOY. Yes, I am.

SHOEMENDER. The Girl, mayhap?

BOY [*shortly*]. Yes. She promised to meet me here after the eighth dance, and here I am and no sign of her.

SHOEMENDER. You sure it was after the eighth?

BOY [*with dignity*]. I'd hardly make a mistake about a thing like that.

SHOEMENDER. Oh, sometimes men do make mistakes.

BOY. There's nothing funny about this. I saw her dancing any number of times with that Poet to-night.

SHOEMENDER. If she was my girl no poet man would have a chance to dance with her.

BOY [*all on edge*]. Oh, you don't say? Well, let me

tell you something—girls and everything have changed since your time.

SHOEMENDER. And how about boys?

BOY [*hotly*]. I'll not talk to you! You don't understand about the things of to-day! [*A light step is heard by ourselves, but the* BOY *is too excited to notice it.*]

SHOEMENDER. As far as understanding goes, my lad, I'm thinking to-day is the same as yesterday, and to-morrow will be like to-day. [*A soft, merry laugh bursts in upon this sage remark, and the two men turn to find the* WOMAN *looking at them in quizzical amusement. She is lovely in her evening gown of black clinging stuff, the moonlight on her white neck and shoulders causing them to gleam like polished marble against the shadows of the night.*]

WOMAN. Dear me! Philosophy by moonlight, and how abstruse it all sounds! [*As she speaks the* BOY *approaches her eagerly, and at sight of him she feigns great surprise.*]

BOY. Dear lady!

WOMAN. *You* here?

BOY [*explaining helplessly*]. You see—I couldn't help myself.

WOMAN. Oh, yes . . . so you came here to philosophize in the moonlight.

BOY [*gloomily*]. *Philosophize* . . . like a fish!

SHOEMENDER. 'Twas me as was trying to smooth his feathers down, lady.

WOMAN [*softly to* BOY]. Ah . . . has something gone wrong to-night?

BOY. I should say it has.

WOMAN. Something I have done, Boy?

BOY [*in a burst of feeling*]. Heavens, no! You have been an angel to me.

WOMAN [*with a soft laugh*]. All of that?

BOY. Don't joke. Life wouldn't be worth living to-night if it were not for you. [*The* WOMAN *smiles with delicate understanding, and the scene becomes too much*

*for the* SHOEMENDER, *who curls up on the moss for another nap.*]

WOMAN. Poor Boy! If I had known you were so unhappy to-night I would have been kinder to you.

BOY. How could you have been any nicer? I'll never forget this night.

WOMAN. Couldn't there be others as nice?

BOY. Do you mean you'd be that good to me again?

WOMAN. Why not?

BOY. It seems too good to be true. I've danced nearly every dance with you.

WOMAN [*playfully*]. You'll have people talking about us.

BOY [*carried away*]. Who cares? When I wasn't dancing with you I was watching you.

WOMAN. Now I know every old woman in the hotel is gossiping about us.

BOY [*laughing manfully*]. Let 'em—we can stand it! I'd sell my soul to dance with you.

WOMAN [*pretending to be shocked*]. Hush, Boy!

BOY. Say, I believe all that stuff about fairies and nymphs now. It was like dancing with one of them when I—[*hesitates delicately, then rushes on boldly*]—when I held you in my arms.

WOMAN. Dear me! I found you just a boy this afternoon and now you are a man.

BOY [*flattered and serious*]. You made me that, dear lady.

WOMAN. How foolish!

BOY. No, believe me, it isn't foolish. I was a boy until you came along to-day and gave me a glimpse of life—*real life.*

WOMAN. And you don't want to be a boy again?

BOY. Great day—*no!* After this night I'd never be satisfied.

WOMAN. But you seemed so happy when I first saw you to-day.

Boy [*sulkily*]. I thought I was.

Woman. And the Girl was so lovable, I thought.

Boy [*in abused tones*]. I used to think so, too.

Woman. She seemed so lovely and frank and true—

Boy [*exploding*]. True—I say *true!* I thought she was too! I would have staked my life on it!

Woman. Surely she hasn't deceived you in any way? She had such a frank way of looking at one.

Boy [*hard as nails*]. *Frank*—great heavens! You should have seen the way she was looking at that Poet tonight.

Woman. Too frank, did you think?

Boy. Disgusting! And the big idiot was talking to her like he owned her.

Woman. Don't tell me so!

Boy. Yes, and she liked it, by heck! Looked up into his eyes like she worshipped him.

Woman. Pshaw! I am disappointed in her.

Boy. Oh, she fell for him the minute she saw him this morning [*scathingly*]; called him a god!

Woman. How absurd!

Boy. She's cracked! Did you see how many times she danced with him this evening? Five out of eight, I swear she did.

Woman. Shocking! And is she engaged to you?

Boy. Well, not officially, you know, but we have sworn to be true to each other *always.*

Woman. And then she treats you like this.

Boy. It's hard on a fellow.

Woman. But then, you must remember she is young—very young.

Boy [*flushing consciously*]. Er—yes.

Woman. The trouble is, I fear, the poor little thing is much too young for a man like you.

Boy [*swelling with pride*]. M—maybe you're right.

Woman. I see plainly that she doesn't realize the seriousness of things as you do.

BOY [*basking in her sympathy*]. She never did! I never could make her be serious.

WOMAN [*sighing gently*]. A butterfly, I am afraid.

BOY. Of course she is. Look at the way she flew from me to that poet fellow! It would make you sick to see the way she looks at him.

WOMAN [*soothingly*]. There now, don't worry about her. She has found what she wants, and you are too much of a man of the world to interfere in a case like this.

BOY [*magnanimously*]. Well, I'll say I am! Let her go her way and I'll go mine.

WOMAN. She will long for you some day.

BOY [*darkly*]. Let her . . . I'm through with her.

WOMAN. I feel sorry for her.

BOY [*soulfully*]. You are the most beautiful, tender-hearted, wonderful woman in the world!

WOMAN [*leading him on*]. Dear Boy, how can you say that?

BOY [*ardently*]. How can I say anything else? No more young girls for me. They don't know the meaning of love. But you do . . . don't you?

WOMAN. Do you think so?

BOY. I know it! [*Holds out his hands to her and she slips hers within his.*] Dear hands! [*Kissing them.*] My lovely, sympathetic lady. Oh . . . I could listen to your voice forever. It's like—like—oh, shucks! That fool Poet could tell you, but I can't.

WOMAN. I like your way best.

BOY [*his head completely turned*]. You are the only woman in the world for me! Let's go back and dance . . . I could dance forever with you. [*Impulsively he draws her away, she allowing herself to be led off with just enough restraint, and just enough of guile to fill his young soul with elation.*]

WOMAN. You flatterer! How old are you, anyway—twenty-five or six?

BOY [*catching his breath*]. You—you're guessing close!

WOMAN [*as they pass out*]. You act like thirty.

BOY [*you can just hear him for they are off the stage now*]. You are the most wonderful woman in the world! [*They are gone now, leaving behind them the silence of the night, unbroken save by the call of some night bird, the faint sound of running water, and the low chuckle of the little* SHOEMENDER, *who is lying as though asleep in the shadows. Softly we hear him singing in his quavering yet not unpleasant voice.*]

SHOEMENDER [*singing*].

> All went well wi' my true love and I,
> Till one day Life came a-riding by—
> Life so handsome—

[*But he breaks off at the sound of a light, quick step, and a soft voice calling:* "Beloved!"] Hey, oh! Here's a pretty kettle of fish! Now she's coming and the lad's gone . . . One day life came a-riding by . . . [*Settles himself again as though asleep, and a moment later the* GIRL *enters, looking pretty as a picture in her simple, girlish white evening dress—just the type of youth and frankness that a poet, perhaps, would admire.*]

GIRL [*softly*]. Beloved! Where are you? [*No masculine answer greets her call, whereupon, she seems upset, and, one might say, conscience-stricken.*]

GIRL. Well, for goodness sakes, he isn't here! Beloved! [*Showing a touch of irritation.*] Can it be he has forgotten? Tenth dance . . . yes, I am sure that was the one we agreed upon, and he is late. [*Starting in surprise at sight of the* SHOEMENDER, *and then accosting him.*] Gracious, if it isn't the Shoemender! [*Bending over him.*] Wake up, please!

SHOEMENDER [*sitting up and rubbing his eyes*]. Well, Miss?

GIRL [*curiously*]. Do you live under that tree all the time?

SHOEMENDER. Sometimes I do, and again I don't.

GIRL. Have you been here all evening?

SHOEMENDER. I'm thinking I have.

GIRL. Then tell me—has the Boy been here?

SHOEMENDER. I'm thinking he has.

GIRL. The wretch! How long ago was that?

SHOEMENDER. About as long as a cat's nap.

GIRL [*indignantly*]. That makes me furious! Been here and gone again. What did he say, Shoemender?

SHOEMENDER. He seemed put out, Miss, at your not being here.

GIRL. The silly—it wasn't time for me.

SHOEMENDER. He said you were late.

GIRL. I am not. The tenth dance was just finished.

SHOEMENDER. But he was thinking it was the eighth dance you was to meet him.

GIRL. *Eighth!* He's crazy! It was the tenth.

SHOEMENDER. Couldn't you have made a mistake, Miss?

GIRL. Of course I could—but, you see, I didn't.

SHOEMENDER. Well, then, that settles it.

GIRL [*laughing*]. As far as I am concerned it does. How long did he stay here?

SHOEMENDER. Long enough to take a good nap, I should say.

GIRL [*melting a little*]. Well, the poor fellow! What did he do all the while?

SHOEMENDER. Hm! He was right busy, I take it.

GIRL [*quickly*]. Was he all alone?

SHOEMENDER. He might have been—and again, he might not.

GIRL [*sharply*]. Was that Woman with him?

SHOEMENDER. If I remember rightly a woman did come.

GIRL. I might have known it. She's been leading him on all this evening.

SHOEMENDER. But he did come to meet you, Miss.

GIRL [*hard as nails*]. He might have waited.

SHOEMENDER. He seemed hurt that you wasn't here.

GIRL. I came the right time.

SHOEMENDER. He was hurt . . . and the woman seemed a great comfort to him. [*The* POET *enters quietly, and stands gazing at the* GIRL, *but she is too upset to notice him.*]

GIRL [*proudly*]. I—I am hurt too.

POET. And who has dared to hurt my little wood nymph?

GIRL [*starting back in alarm*]. Oh! You here! [*As the* POET *approaches her we see her face light with pleasure tinged with awe.*]

POET. Naturally. You ran away, so what could a poor fellow do but follow you?

GIRL [*flushed and pleased*]. You flatter me so I ought not to listen. [*The* SHOEMENDER *sighs and curls up once more at the foot of the tree. The* POET *smiles into the* GIRL'S *eyes with kindly assurance.*]

POET. I am not flattering you, dear Girl. I like you most genuinely.

GIRL [*looking frankly up into his eyes*]. But how can you care for just a girl like me?

POET. Why not?

GIRL. Because you are so wonderful. You know more than I could ever dream of knowing.

POET. But you have something that I would give all my knowledge to possess.

GIRL [*incredulously*]. I? What have I that *you* would want?

POET. Youth. I would gladly change places with the Boy.

GIRL [*with a shudder*]. Don't speak of him to me!

POET. Don't tell me it was he who hurt you?

GIRL [*laughing to hide her real feelings*]. Yes, it was. He has deserted me . . . don't you think I am to be pitied?

POET. I think he is a fool! But how did it happen? Surely it was not done in cold blood?

GIRL. He was to meet me here after the tenth dance, and

when I came immediately after it, I found he had been here and gone again.

POET. I can't imagine anyone so foolish as not to wait for you.

GIRL. The Shoemender said he was hurt. [*Appealing to the* POET *with piquant charm.*] Now what had I done to hurt him?

POET. Nothing . . . the young brute!

GIRL [*flushing*]. But that isn't the worst of it.

POET. What? Is there more to this bad business?

GIRL. It isn't funny! That woman followed him down here.

POET [*staggered*]. You don't mean it!

GIRL. Oh, but I do! And she flattered him and made over him and led him away—

POET. By the nose, eh? . . . Disgusting!

GIRL. Well, isn't it? Did you notice how she has been trailing him all this evening, and luring him on?

POET [*delicately*]. I did, but I hoped you wouldn't see.

GIRL. How could I help it? She was positively shameless.

POET. And she is old enough to know better.

GIRL [*scornfully*]. I should think so! Don't you hate an old flirt?

POET. I prefer a young one.

GIRL. Don't laugh—I . . . I—

POET [*taking her hand deferentially*]. My dear, you are hurt. [*She drops her eyes and he takes the other hand.*] And I am the last one to laugh at you. Let us forget all about this silly affair. You are far too fine to allow yourself to grieve over the antics of a foolish boy.

GIRL [*lifting her eyes to his guilelessly*]. It is so good of you to understand.

POET. I can't understand his treating you so rudely. Are you engaged?

GIRL. Well, kind of . . . We have promised to be true *always.*

POET. And then he deserts you for a woman—

GIRL [*with a touch of jealousy*]. Old enough to be his mother!

POET. Oh, well, he is such a boy it flatters him to have her even notice him. Now you seem so much older than he.

GIRL. I—I always feel that way myself.

POET. It is noticeable. He has all the crude ways of a mere boy; but you have such poise.

GIRL. I—I wish that were true.

POET. Believe me, dear Girl, I mean it. You have the frankness and beauty of youth, the delicate grace of a wood nymph, and the charm of a woman of thirty.

GIRL [*laughing but pleased*]. Now I know you are flattering me.

POET. Has the Boy never said such things to you?

GIRL. I should say not! He wouldn't know how.

POET. What a child he is! You wouldn't grieve over a helpless young thing like that?

GIRL [*with spirit*]. Indeed I'll not! [*And then a little sadly.*] I don't believe there is such a thing as young love.

POET. I fear you are right. Boys are such thoughtless chaps, led hither and yon—

GIRL. Yes, by the first woman that comes their way.

POET. How wise my little wood nymph is getting to be! But there, we'll not waste another thought on the Boy. Shall we return to the dance?

GIRL [*her eyes shining*]. I should love to!

POET. Good! I could dance forever with you. It makes me feel like a boy again.

GIRL [*as he draws her arm through his and leads her away*]. Don't let it make you feel that way—I wouldn't have you a day younger.

POET [*smiling down into her eyes*]. Now who is the flatterer?

GIRL [*frankly, as they pass out*]. Not I—I am sick of boys. Men are so much more interesting.

POET. And you are wonderful, my little wood nymph.

[*They are gone now, and as their voices die away, there comes to us the sound of a chuckle, low at first, but gaining in strength each moment, and then dying away again into silence. As the curtain falls the quavering but not unpleasant voice of the little* SHOEMENDER *is heard singing as if to himself.*]

SHOEMENDER [*singing*].

All went well wi' my true love and I,
Till one day Life came a-riding by—
Life so handsome and bold and free—
Then all went ill wi' my true love and me.

## SCENE III

TIME—*A week later.*

SCENE—*The same, save that the mystical moonlight is replaced by the cool, sweet light of an early summer morn. Repressed laughter is heard, and we see the* POET *enter cautiously accompanied by the* WOMAN. *They are dressed in outing clothes, the* POET *carrying lunch basket and fishing tackle, and both seem to be in a jolly mood. As they come upon the scene he laughs aloud without restraint, and she lays a warning hand upon his lips, smiling as she does so.*]

WOMAN. Do be quiet! If the Boy gets wind of the fact that I am here he will be sure to follow. [*They are both facing front stage, and when the* WOMAN *makes this remark, we see with amazement and foreboding, the* BOY'S *head thrust from behind the trunk of a tree at rear left of the stage. He stares at the two in astonishment and growing anger, and then quickly disappears again.*]

POET [*whimsically*]. I know of something worse than that . . .

WOMAN [*amused*]. The Girl?

POET. Mhm! She would adore going fishing with me this morning. [*They look at each other and laugh in*

*amused understanding. At this moment we see the* GIRL *stealthily rise up from behind a clump of bushes at the rear right of the stage. Tensely she surveys her hero, scarce able to believe his perfidy; and then, her eyes blazing angrily, she silently disappears again into the shelter of her hiding place.*]

WOMAN [*dropping down on the log*]. I've had all I can stand.

POET [*dropping down beside her*]. So have I.

WOMAN. Do you realize that it was just a week ago to-day we found the Boy and Girl?

POET. You are right. They were sitting on this very log.

WOMAN [*heaving a sigh*]. My, it has been a long week!

POET. It was diverting at first.

WOMAN. Oh, yes, but the atmosphere is growing too ardent for me now.

POET. It's ghastly! I have been the ideal poet until I have reached the point of desperation. I feel like doing something disgustingly crude—eating a peck of onions, or wearing a celluloid collar. [*Turning to her with a twinkle in his eye.*] Why, my dear, I don't believe you realize how wonderful I am.

WOMAN [*twinkling also*]. No more wonderful than I. And my eyes! . . . Why have you never told me how beautiful they are?

POET. G'long, you ingrate! You have never appreciated what an honor it is to know a great man like me.

WOMAN. Oh, but my voice! He said that fool Poet might be able to describe it, but he couldn't.

POET. I could—but it wouldn't pass as poetry.

WOMAN. I have yet to see anything you have written that would pass as poetry. [*They grin at each other with the understanding of an old friendship.*]

POET. Now we are quits.

WOMAN. Not until I tell you what a horrid old thing you were to make love to the Girl.

POET. I didn't make love to her—but she is a charming young piece.

WOMAN. She is a dear, and you put yourself out to fascinate her.

POET. What sublime nerve! And all the while you were luring that poor Boy on!

WOMAN. Nonsense, I was just being nice to him. He is a lovable fellow.

POET. He is a nice, serious, clean-minded boy, and you put yourself out to turn his poor head and make a fool of him.

WOMAN [*rising*]. Oh, well, that is what you men like—young or old.

POET [*rising*]. And the women?

WOMAN. That is another story. But this has been a hectic week, and I have been wonderful long enough.

POET. And I have played with youth long enough.

WOMAN. Amen! Let us get away from here before they find us.

POET. The ayes have it. Let's go where we can be comfortable—

WOMAN [*picking up the lunch basket*]. And thirty odd—

POET [*picking up the fishing tackle*]. And mediocre—[*They move away chattering merrily.*]

WOMAN. And eat onions—

POET. And wear suspenders— [*They are gone now, and for a moment more we hear their laughter, and then silence—a tense silence as when a storm is brewing. And it is. From behind the clump of bushes the* GIRL *steals swiftly in upon us: and at the same moment as though both had been impelled by some hidden spring, the* BOY *leaps out from behind his tree. And now the silence is even more tense, for at sight of each other they come to an abrupt pause, and stand staring, each into the other's eyes, in an astonishment that soon changes into angry accusation.*]

GIRL [*in a low, angry voice*]. *You* here?

BOY [*in a scornful tone*]. *You* here. [*And it is to be regretted that scorn and bitterness are ever present in the next few minutes of the scene that follows.*]

GIRL. I thought I saw someone sneak in behind that tree!

BOY. *Sneak* in! And how did you get here?

GIRL. That's my affair!

BOY [*self-righteously*]. You ought to be ashamed of yourself—running after that Poet!

GIRL. Of course, you are not running after anyone! Oh, no!

BOY. You keep out of my affairs!

GIRL. Oh, it's all right for you to talk about me, but when I accuse you of running after that woman that's different.

BOY [*savagely*]. I'm not running after her.

GIRL. Why are you here then?

BOY. Why are you here?

GIRL. Everybody's laughing at the way she's leading you on—by the nose.

BOY [*ready to fight*]. *By the nose*—who said that?

GIRL. It fits, doesn't it?

BOY. If that soft-headed old Poet said that I'll lick him!

GIRL. You couldn't do it.

BOY. I'll show you both! The old scamp! Everybody is pitying you for the way you're letting him fascinate you!

GIRL [*stung*]. They don't need to bother.

BOY. Another victim, they all say.

GIRL. That's what they say about you. [*Again they stare at each other in quivering silence, and when they speak once more, shame has tempered bitterness, and the sharp tones have grown somewhat husky.*]

BOY. Could you hear what they said—just now?

GIRL. Every word . . . and I hate them both.

BOY. He made fun of you—

GIRL. And she made fun of you—

BOY. I don't see how you could love a man like that. He was playing with you . . . I knew it all the time.

GIRL. It's a pity you couldn't see she was playing with you.

BOY. You drove me to it. Why didn't you meet me here that night?

GIRL. I came and you had gone off with her.

BOY. You were late, and I waited until I got mad.

GIRL. I was not late. The tenth dance, you said.

BOY. No—the eighth, we said.

GIRL. I know it was the tenth . . . anyway, you might have waited.

BOY. How did I know you'd come if I did? You had been dancing with that fool all evening.

GIRL. I don't see how you had time to know it. You were trailing after that woman every minute.

BOY. What if I did dance with her? I kept my promise with you.

GIRL. So did I—but you were gone.

BOY. Of course. I know when I am dropped.

GIRL. And you were the one who was *always* going to be true.

BOY. And how about you? [*Enter the* SHOEMENDER *singing right merrily.*]

SHOEMENDER [*singing*].

> All went well wi' my true love and I,
> Till one day Life came a-riding by—

[*Seeing the erstwhile lovers engaged in a heated argument, he pauses, nodding shrewdly.*]

SHOEMENDER. Hey, oh! Are you two here again? [*Eagerly they turn to him for sympathy.*]

GIRL. Shoemender, you heard him tell how he loved me that day a week ago?

SHOEMENDER. Aye, he was strong for you.

BOY. And you heard her—

SHOEMENDER. 'Tis true, lad.

GIRL. But he's been untrue—

BOY. So has she!

SHOEMENDER [*scratching his head*]. Are you sure now?

GIRL. Of course! That Woman . . . Well, you heard him say that day he could listen to her voice forever?

SHOEMENDER. Mhm! I believe he did.

GIRL. Well, he has had a week of it.

BOY. And you heard her say that Poet fellow was a god?

SHOEMENDER. Mhm! Something like.

BOY. Well, she's been worshipping him for a week.

SHOEMENDER. Where's the ones that caused the trouble?

GIRL [*in a shamed voice*]. Gone.

BOY [*huskily*]. Tired of us. [*They are both rather pathetic now.*]

SHOEMENDER. Left you two with the bag to hold, eh?

GIRL [*with spirit*]. It's a shame! He has been untrue to me for a woman who has led him on heartlessly.

BOY. And she's been untrue to me for a slick-tongued scoundrel.

SHOEMENDER [*to* GIRL]. Well, now, Miss, how many times have you told the Boy he has been untrue?

GIRL [*surprised*]. I don't know.

SHOEMENDER [*to* BOY]. And you, lad? How many times have you said it to her?

BOY [*flushed and nettled*]. How do I know?

SHOEMENDER. Hey, oh! Kind of making fools of your two selves—eh? [*The two young people look at each other for a moment in shocked surprise, and drop their eyes in confusion.*]

BOY [*huskily*]. Maybe we have.

GIRL [*no less huskily*]. It—it looks that way.

SHOEMENDER. So I was thinking. And which one, do you think, has been the biggest fool? [*The estranged lovers appear very uncomfortable.*]

BOY. Oh, I say—

GIRL. That's not fair.

SHOEMENDER. Meaning you don't know—eh? [*Again they look at each other and swallow hard and helplessly.*]

BOY [*in an outburst of confession*]. Gosh, yes! I have been a fool!

GIRL [*not to be outdone*]. And I have been a perfect idiot.

SHOEMENDER. Now that all sounds different again.

BOY. I did tag after that Woman, and talk a lot of gush to her.

GIRL. I admit I was flattered when the Poet told me a lot of impossible stuff.

BOY. And I hung on after I knew she was tired of me.

GIRL [*in a low, shamed voice*]. So did I.

SHOEMENDER. Queer, I call it all. When I first came in you were calling each other names. Now it's your own selves you're hard on. Hey, oh! First thing you know you'll each be swearing it's *you* that's been untrue, and not the other. [*The two young people look at each other, and this time a shy, softened smile comes over the face of each.*]

BOY [*manfully*]. I was untrue.

GIRL [*frankly*]. So was I . . . and I am sorry.

SHOEMENDER. It's not so wonderful then to be loved by someone years older than you—eh, my young ones?

GIRL [*thoughtfully*]. It isn't fun at all. It just turns your head, raises you up off your feet, and then drops you with a dull thud.

SHOEMENDER. And a week ago you didn't know all that.

BOY. It swells you up like a balloon, and then bursts and leaves you all flat.

SHOEMENDER. How wise you are—and all in a week you learned it!

GIRL [*smiling wistfully*]. I am glad we were both foolish together.

BOY [*with an answering grin*]. Two fools together.

SHOEMENDER. Aye! Two children together, two fools together, and now two wise young people together. And

I'm thinking if I was you I'd go on always doing things together.

BOY [*solemnly*]. We will.

GIRL [*with a smile*]. I'm thinking we'd better. [*She seats herself on the log where first she told us of her love, and the* SHOEMENDER *drops down beneath the tree opposite her.*]

SHOEMENDER. A week ago you was like two young thrushes, sitting on that log there, a-planning your nest as nice as need be.

BOY [*sitting on the log also, but leaving a noticeable space between himself and the* GIRL]. Seems more like a year than a week.

SHOEMENDER. That's what you get for going gallivanting off with that blue bird in her fine blue feathers and red front. After the thrush's brown dress she looked fine—eh, lad?

BOY [*sheepishly*]. She—she was a good looker all right.

SHOEMENDER. Oh, yes, them blue birds do catch the eye. And you, Miss—you got tired of the way your young thrush made love, and went off with a mockingbird.

GIRL [*blushing and confused*]. I—well, he did sing rather well at first.

SHOEMENDER. Oh, them mockers can't be beat for singing in a flashy sort of way.

GIRL [*softly*]. I know now that I love the song of the thrush best of all.

BOY [*moving closer to her on the log*]. And as for looks I'd put a thrush up against any bird in the forest.

SHOEMENDER. That's because you two are thrushes, and it's like take like in nature, or there's the mischief to pay. The thrush with the thrush, the squirrel with the squirrel, youth with youth—and old nature sits back and smiles.

BOY [*guilelessly, as he draws still nearer to the* GIRL]. But the Woman—she seemed to think I was almost as old as she was.

GIRL. She was stringing you. The Poet was much more

sensible. He said I could give him youth and he could give me wisdom.

SHOEMENDER. Did he now? Well, Miss, it sounds well but it won't work. Youth bound to middle age soon withers; and staid middle age bound to youth grows bored. The surest happiness is when two youngsters come together, mature together, and grow old together.

GIRL. Why shouldn't they tire of each other, too?

SHOEMENDER [*rising and looking shrewdly into her eyes*]. Because they don't, Miss—most generally, they don't. Young love seldom withers or becomes bored, because it carries its youth with it to the end of its days. Hey, oh, I must be getting on.

BOY [*gratefully*]. Good-bye, Shoemender, you're a good old sport.

GIRL [*with frank sincerity*]. Thank you, Shoemender. Thank you for . . . just everything.

SHOEMENDER. Don't mention it, Miss. [*In silence they watch him go, unmindful of the fact that he has forgotten his pack, so intent they are upon listening to the tune he is whistling. Soon a light of recognition comes over the* GIRL'S *face.*]

GIRL. Do you hear what he is whistling?

BOY [*happily, his face now alight*]. I should say I do!

GIRL. It is "Beloved—" [*Stops with a laugh that has a note of shyness in it.*]

BOY. That's it! [*Looking full into her eyes for the first time in a week.*] "Beloved, it is morn."

GIRL [*softly*]. Yes . . . beloved. [*Suddenly he takes her in his arms, and she seems as glad to be there as he is to have her.*]

BOY [*with a sigh of content*]. What fools we have been—the little Shoemender was right.

GIRL. As if anyone could take your place.

BOY. Or yours, my own. [*They are now sitting side by side on the log, his arm around her, and she leaning snugly against him.*]

GIRL [*wistfully*]. I don't mind telling you now—but sometimes I was so bored with that man.

BOY. Bored! Believe me, after the first two days I could hardly stand it. She couldn't talk about anything but men, cards, clothes and all that line of stuff. Gee, it got tiresome!

GIRL. Don't you hate it? But my, he was worse than that. He was so full of himself he was disgusting. And as for his poetry . . . he thought nobody else could write but him, and my dear, the stuff didn't even rhyme.

BOY. The poor nut! Give me Kipling or Service—

GIRL [*laughing*]. Or Tom Moore—

BOY [*smiling down into her eyes*]. You bet! [*Growing serious again.*] But listen, honey, let me tell you something awful about that Woman. She—she doesn't . . . maybe I'd better not tell you.

GIRL [*firmly*]. But you must, dear.

BOY [*speaking apologetically, as though he should not mention anything so indelicate to her*]. She told me she didn't believe in marriage.

GIRL [*shocked*]. You don't mean it? How horrid! [*Then she adds with quaint seriousness.*] He—the Poet didn't either.

BOY [*fiercely*]. The old scoundrel! Why did you fool with him for a whole week?

GIRL [*sighing*]. I didn't want you to know what a silly I had made of myself. Why did you stick to her?

BOY [*sighing also*]. Same reason. [*Drawing her closer to him.*] But, thank Heaven, all that is over! And we surely believe in marriage, don't we, beloved?

GIRL. Thank Heaven, yes!

BOY [*ruefully*]. But Gee! Just think it will be two whole years before we can get married!

GIRL [*brightly*]. But that won't matter. After this we will always be true to each other.

BOY. I'll swear to that!

GIRL. And we'll be growing closer to each other all the time.

BOY [*happily*]. Let's talk about the little home . . .

GIRL. The nest, the Shoemender called it.

BOY. Funny old chap . . . [*His eyes alight.*] The nest . . . I like that name for it. I can see it now—

GIRL [*eyes half shut*]. So can I! It is early morning there . . .

BOY. And the birds are all singing.

GIRL. Yes, the thrushes—

BOY. Of course, the thrushes.

GIRL. I feel sure they have a nest in the vines—

BOY. Yes—under the eaves.

GIRL. Can't you smell the flowers—honeysuckle, isn't it? Oh, dear heart, isn't it all wonderful and lovely?

BOY [*leaning over*]. I can think of something lovelier still.

GIRL [*shyly, for his look is very ardent*]. What is that, dear Boy?

BOY. I am standing beneath your window, looking up, and calling to you—"Beloved!"

GIRL. And of course, I come and answer—"Yes, beloved!"

BOY. And you stand there like a picture . . . with the vines for your frame . . .

GIRL [*softly*]. But tell me—why do you call me? [*Here it is that the little* SHOEMENDER *returns for his pack, but they are too engrossed to see him pick it up, and then pause to look at them in a humor most whimsical.*]

BOY. Because the thrushes are singing . . . and beloved—

GIRL [*her frank eyes now softly beautiful*]. Yes . . . beloved?

BOY. It is morn— [*And the little* SHOEMENDER *chuckles audibly, but they do not hear him; and now the kindly curtain hides them from our curious eyes.*]

[CURTAIN]

# THE WILLOW PLATE *

## *A PLAY IN THE CHINESE MANNER*

By

FLORENCE RYERSON

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## CHARACTERS

The Property Man
Mung Chu-po
Cheng Loy Fah
The Dragon
The Spirit of Mung Sin Chee
The Spirit of Tai Hoo Tso
A Mandarin of the Sapphire Button
His Body Guard
Two Flower Girls

Place: China.
Time: A hundred years ago.

# THE WILLOW PLATE

*A gong is struck three times. The curtains slowly part. The stage is hung with dark curtains, with an entrance at either side, and is completely bare except for a large disc at the back. This is the Willow Plate. On it is painted a willow tree and underneath its drooping branches are three figures:* CHENG LOY FAH, *a beautiful girl;* MUNG CHU-PO, *a boy of eighteen and the* DRAGON. *He is a ferocious looking beast as he stands there, his scaly tail wound around him and his claws outstretched, between the boy and girl; his eyes large and his mouth very wide and red but, in spite of his grotesqueness, there is something vaguely human about him. After a slight pause the gong is again struck three times and the* PROPERTY MAN *shuffles in from the left.* He wears a long black cloak with hood attached and carries a pair of black mittens. With great dignity he advances to the center of the stage and bows ceremoniously.*

PROPERTY MAN. Most honorable audience, this insignificant person desires to humbly thank you for attending our unspeakable production. Miserable worms as we are, we shall strive to win the approval of this august company. [*He bows again.*] Much that we do in the production of this little play may seem strange. For this antiquity, honorable audience, we ask your indulgence. Our theatre had its birth in the dynasty of the great Ming-Huang and in reverence to so glorious a beginning we have kept our

* "The actor always enters from the doorway at stage right, and leaves by the one stage left." Glenn Hughes, The Chinese Drama in "The History of the Theatre."

stage, from that day to this, ever the same. Ours is a theatre of tradition. [*He bows again.*] Our story is the story of the Willow Plate: Long, long ago, in the Province of Lein Ning, which is on the banks of the Pei-kiang, there lived a Prince, much loved and revered by his people, whose only son, Mung Chu-po, was promised in marriage to the beautiful Cheng Loy Fah. In accordance with ancient custom, the parents met to arrange the marriage festival and to set long sticks of incense before the household gods. But, O sorrowful omission, in the excitement of the moment they forgot to place incense before one of the lesser gods. Now even insignificant second-class gods are sometimes powerful. In his wrath this god changed the loved ones into painted patterns upon a Willow Plate and with them placed an ugly dragon—to keep them separate. Then he caused the plate to be carried across the towering Fu-niu-shan mountains to a hidden cave. But one of the greater gods granted that at the change of every moon these two, Mung Chu-po and Cheng Loy Fah should be, for one happy hour, released from their prison. So we shall show, with your august permission, that love is stronger than wickedness . . . stronger even than black magic, for as the years passed these two figures came to love one the other with an all-consuming passion . . . for such was their destiny in another life—and it is easier for a gnat to bend a marble tower than it is to change the course of destiny. Forgive this earth-born one, august sirs. Puffed up and overstuffed with words, I have intruded too long on your welcome. [*He lifts his finger to his lips.*] It is the hour of moon-change. [*He lifts the hood over his head and draws on the black mittens.*] As is the custom of our Chinese theatre, I am now invisible to human eyes. For such patience as you have shown me, I give you thanks. [*He again bows ceremoniously and shuffles away. The gong is struck three times. The figures on the plate begin to move slowly. The* Dragon *leers at them a moment but sleep pulls at the heavy lids of his eyes and his head begins*

*to nod; several times he tries to rouse himself but in the end he gives in, curls up and lies down, his head between his ugly paws.* MING CHU-PO *raises his hand,* CHENG LOY FAH *rests hers lightly on his and together they advance to the center of the stage. There they bow to each other and pivot on their heels, to better show their costumes.* CHU-PO *is the first to address the audience.*]

CHU-PO. By your leave, I am Chu-po. I bow three times. [*He bows.*]

FAH [*bowing to the audience*]. Gentle listeners, with ceremonial bow, I tell you I am Cheng Loy Fah. [*The gong is struck three times. The two actors assume the characters of the play.*]

CHU-PO [*addressing* FAH]. Gracious being, our little hour has come.

FAH. Our little hour of happiness. [*She lifts her two hands before her and bows.*] My Lord, may your ever welcome shadow rest in my two hands.

CHU-PO [*teasingly*]. Tell me, sweet smelling name, Fuchsia Flower, are you happy here beside me so?

FAH [*coyly*]. My Lord makes sport of his slave.

CHU-PO [*pursing his lips*]. Mine was but a simple question.

FAH. Which is not so simply answered. If I say "yes" it makes me over bold . . . if I say "no" it sets a lie upon my lips.

CHU-PO [*his eyes dancing*]. La! You make a riddle of my words!

FAH [*slowly lifting her eyes to his*]. For answer to your question, my Lord, look deep into my eyes. They mirror the words it would be unmaidenly for me to speak, even in a whisper.

CHU-PO [*moving closer to her and gazing into her eyes; a light breaks across his face*]. Oh!

FAH. What is it that you see?

CHU-PO. I see . . . I see . . . it is myself I see reflected there!

FAH. My heart is in my eyes.

CHU-PO [*lifting his arms*]. My flower. . . .

FAH [*darting a glance at the* DRAGON]. Sh-h-h! The Dragon lifted his head and stared at us!

CHU-PO [*with mock bravado*]. I'll defy the ugly beast and repeat the things my heart cries out. Cheng Loy Fah, this I must tell you. . . .

FAH [*a frightened look comes into her face as she backs away several steps*]. No! No! Some other time. . . . I am afraid!

CHU-PO [*bowing*]. I did not mean to frighten you. Your every wish is a command to me. Your very words hold me their prisoner.

FAH [*smiling*]. My wish is for music. You will play for me?

CHU-PO [*nodding*]. And you, in turn, must dance for me. A merry . . . happy . . . dance. My heart is very light to-day. It soars to heaven like a thing with wings . . . like a kite when the string breaks and a sudden wind carries it high into the blue.

FAH. A happy heart is an omen for a happy future.

CHU-PO. Perhaps, but to be with my Lady of the Willow Plate is happiness enough for me.

FAH [*covering her lips lightly with her hand*]. Sh-h-h! Again the Dragon lifted his head. Should his anger be aroused he would send us back to prison before the appointed hour is ended.

CHU-PO. Ugly dreams, perhaps, stir his wicked mind. To the wicked all things are ugly.

FAH. He hates us, Chu-po, because we laugh.

CHU-PO. All happiness must have its drop of bitter, too.

FAH. We have been happy, my Lord.

CHU-PO. So shall we always be . . . to-morrow . . . and then again to-morrow after that.

FAH [*suddenly clutching at her heart*]. You said to-morrow!

CHU-PO. It seemed a natural thing to say.

FAH [*shaking her head*]. It's not a word that's used by figures on a painted plate. It is a human word. It is the human folk who always say "to-morrow" . . . and "to-morrow" . . . and "to-morrow." It is the human folk that live for the day that is ahead. [*Mysteriously.*] Always we have lived but for the hour, and now something seems to whisper that there may be a future for us, too. Have you felt it, my Lord?

CHU-PO. Yes; but I dared not speak lest *he* should hear.

FAH. What can it mean?

CHU-PO. I do not know. It is as if some deep memory were stirring in my mind.

FAH. But only human things have memories!

CHU-PO. I know . . . I know. That's what I cannot understand. It is as if I were a human thing . . . and not a pattern on a plate.

FAH [*sinking down on her knees before him*]. How strange that we should think so many things alike.

CHU-PO [*kneeling down in front of her*]. Why? Are we not part of the same pattern?

FAH. Tell me more! Let your thoughts flow into words and the words into my ears.

CHU-PO. As I stand there in my place upon the plate I dream of many, many things.

FAH. Yes. . . .

CHU-PO. I dream of crimson-roofed pagodas against blue hills . . . of rice fields bending under wind . . . forests of green bamboo . . . azaleas topped with coral bloom. Of all these do I dream.

FAH [*breathlessly*]. And low canals with crowded junks. . . .

CHU-PO. Of crazy winding streets, full of mystery, beneath a silver moon.

FAH. Of all these, I, too, have dreamed. [*Pausing in doubt.*] But how do we know of things we've never seen?

CHU-PO. It may be we have lived some other life. Yes . . . that *must* be the answer.

FAH. Then, but for this little hour of happiness which the gods have granted us, we must go on forever being but painted things upon a painted plate?

CHU-PO [*he shakes his head and smiles*]. No, little pearl-face, no. There is a mystery here. There cannot be a future without a past. All things are but a reflection, as though in a polished lacquer tray. I tell you, the future is but the past entered through another door. O Fah, some day we shall leave our prison here and wander forth across the world.

FAH. You make my heart beat faster!

CHU-PO [*touching her hand lightly*]. When that day comes your hands and heart will be for me alone. [*The* DRAGON *raises his head from his paws and leers at them a moment.*]

FAH. Sh-h-h! The Dragon.

CHU-PO. Alas!

FAH [*lightly*]. Play for me, Chu-po. Play for me! And it will lull the Dragon into sleep again. [CHU-PO *claps his hands twice. The* PROPERTY MAN *enters, from the left, carrying a long-necked musical instrument. This he places in the hands of the boy, and exits, right.*]

CHU-PO [*running his fingers lightly over the strings of the lute*]. It is a little tune just for you, Cheng Loy Fah. [*He plays softly; the girl, in time with the music, sways her head from side to side.*]

FAH [*after he has played a little time*]. It is a very happy tune, my Lord.

CHU-PO. It was made for your little feet alone. You will honor me by dancing to my poor tune?

FAH. What my Lord wishes, that will I do. I live but to obey his gracious commands. [*She rises slowly, poses a moment, then, to* CHU-PO'S *music, does a dance. When she is finished* CHU-PO *springs to his feet.*]

CHU-PO. Little Cheng Loy Fah, you must be mine for ever and ever! [*Unseen by them, the* DRAGON *at the back slowly rises to his feet.*]

FAH. If it could only be so, Chu-po! But we have no parents to arrange our happiness . . . no august ancestors to watch over us.

CHU-PO. We shall go forth into the world and find our parents and our august ancestors! O jade-like, as the flowers love the sun, as the night loves the moon, so do I love you. [*With a roar the* DRAGON *moves forward and steps between them.*]

THE DRAGON. Stand back!

FAH. Oh! [*In terror the girl runs to the farther side of the stage and covers her face with her hands.*]

THE DRAGON [*to* CHU-PO]. Who are you to fill the honorable air with your empty boast of august ancestors? Have you forgotten that you are both but painted patterns?

CHU-PO [*defiantly*]. I tell you I am more than a pattern on a plate! I am a man!

THE DRAGON [*laughing scornfully*]. Since when have you taken onto yourself all the attributes of a human being?

CHU-PO. A memory is stirring within my mind!

THE DRAGON. Your memory is but a bubble, filled with emptiness.

CHU-PO. A mere pattern on a plate cannot love as I love. Cheng Loy Fah will be my bride! I love her with all my heart!

THE DRAGON. Bah! Cheng Loy Fah is mine . . . mine!

FAH [*crying out in fear*]. No . . . no!

CHU-PO. What do you mean?

THE DRAGON [*growling*]. For many years I have watched over her . . . protected her . . . worshiped her.

CHU-PO. But it is I she loves . . . and I who love her. Nothing . . . nothing can separate us! [*Lifting his ugly claws high in the air the* DRAGON *advances toward* CHU-PO.]

THE DRAGON. For your impertinence I'll tear you limb from limb! I'll tear you into a hundred parts and each part into still another hundred! [*The gong is struck three times. The* SPIRIT OF MUNG SIN CHEE *enters from the left.*

*He is an old man. Without the slightest attention to the others he moves down to the front of the stage. He pivots on his heel to show his costume. When he speaks his voice is low and on one even tone.*]

MUNG SIN CHEE. I am the Spirit of Mung Sin Chee, the august grandfather of this young man, Mung Chu-po. [*He points.*] In order not to offend such an honorable audience I make my bow but, before doing so, I must tell you that our family is a most illustrious one and bowing is beneath my dignity. However, I am not one overstuffed with ignominious pride and so I bow. [*He bows, then backs away several steps.*] Mung Chu-po, stand forth.

CHU-PO. Did someone call my name?

MUNG SIN CHEE. It is I, Mung Sin Chee, the Spirit of your most august grandfather.

CHU-PO. Most honorable! [*He falls to his knees before the old man.* FAH *modestly covers her face with her sleeve but keeps one eye uncovered in order to see all that is going on.*]

MUNG SIN CHEE [*with great dignity*]. Arise. Such a position does not become one of our illustrious family. Stand upon your two feet.

CHU-PO [*rising slowly*]. But, O honorable ancestor, I am overcome with joy.

MUNG SIN CHEE. H'm. Lift up your face, my boy. There is much that I must tell you. You have long since forgotten, but many years ago you were brought here a prisoner by evil spirits. For many months I have been marshaling all the forces of the Celestial regions and, at last, we are ready to make an attack against those evil spirits. It has been my pleasure to intercede in your behalf to the great God of Thunder, Loy Gong. This is our purpose: should we stir up a strong enough storm the Willow Plate will be broken . . . and in that case you will again be free. Let me ask, do you fear the Dragon who guards you?

CHU-PO. Most honorable ancestor, your words have filled me with courage. I fear nothing.

MUNG SIN CHEE. H'm. Then I shall continue. If the Dragon is overpowered and cannot return to his place in the pattern it will leave a crack in the Willow Plate . . . now even a man of little wisdom knows that a cracked plate is much easier broken than one which is whole. [*The gong is struck three times.*] I can say no more. The army is almost ready to attack so I must return to the Celestial region. [*With much dignity he marches off, left.* CHU-PO *watches after him until he disappears.*]

CHU-PO. Fah, have you heard? Have you heard?

FAH. I have heard, my Lord. [CHU-PO *starts toward the girl but the* DRAGON *lifts his claws and the boy is forced to back away.* FAH *turns and covers her face. Again the gong is struck three times and* TAI HOO TSO, *a little old lady with mincing steps, enters from the left. She hurries down to the edge of the stage, pivots, then bows.*]

TAI HOO TSO. I bow three times to the honorable audience. I am the Spirit of Tai Hoo Tso, the august great-great-great-great-great-grandmother of that beautiful maiden, Cheng Loy Fah. [*She points.*] I have just hurried down from the Celestial region to whisper a word into her shell-like ear. [*She stops and fans herself.*] Dear me, I've hurried so fast I'm all out of breath. [*She moves toward the girl.*] Cheng Loy Fah.

CHENG LOY FAH [*uncovering her face*]. Who is it calls my name?

TAI HOO TSO. You have long since forgotten that you once prayed to me, for the evil spirits have driven all memory from you, but it is I, Tai Hoo Tso, your great-great-great-great-great-grandmother.

FAH [*sinking to her knees before the little old lady*]. O most honorable ancestor!

TAI HOO TSO. You must know that from my place on high I am watching over you. To-day there will be, beyond

the clouds, a great battle and I pray the gods that the echo of its rumble will be strong enough to break the Willow Plate and set you free.

THE DRAGON. Gr-r-r!

TAI HOO TSO [*stamping her little foot*]. Keep still, worm! I am not done speaking!

FAH. O most august great-great-great-great-great-grandmother. . . .

TAI HOO TSO. Don't keep saying that! It makes me feel so unpleasantly ancient. [*Slyly.*] In my day, insignificant witless one though I was, there were few in all China who could hold a candle to my beauty. [*Confidentially.*] And, my dear, you take after *my* side of the family. [*The gong is struck three times.*] There, I must be getting right back to the Celestial region before they miss me. [*She nods toward* CHU-PO *then whispers behind her hand, to* FAH.] I like the young man . . . but remember, modesty in a young lady of your age is more precious than anything else . . . but don't overdo it, my dear. [*She reaches out and touches the top of* FAH'S *head lightly, then hurries away.*]

FAH [*rising to her feet*]. O Chu-po, we do have ancestors! We do! We are like human things, after all! [*The two start toward each other but the* DRAGON *steps between them and raises his claws. Again* FAH *covers her face and backs away in fear.*]

CHU-PO. Stand aside! No longer do I fear you.

THE DRAGON. I'll break you to pieces and grind you to dust.

CHU-PO. I know at last. . . . I am a man for I have ancestors as other men. No longer am I under your power. I pray to the God of Righteousness for a strong sword. You, who are of the evil spirits, shall be slain. [*The* DRAGON *trembles with fear. The* PROPERTY MAN *shuffles in from the left, with a long, wide-bladed sword which he hands to* CHU-PO *and withdraws. With a roar of anger the* DRAGON *rushes at the boy. Weaving a thrilling but harmless pattern in the air with their slashes, whirls, and passes*

*they make a great show at combat.* CHU-PO *is suddenly thrown off his guard, the* DRAGON *grabs the handle of the sword, wrenches it from the boy and becomes master of the situation. In the struggle* CHU-PO *loses his footing, but just as the* DRAGON *is about to strike he whirls about, grabs the handle of the sword and, after a desperate struggle from side to side, succeeds in regaining possession of the weapon; with both hands he lifts it high in the air and brings it down on the shoulder of the* DRAGON. *With a horrible scream the* DRAGON *grabs the sword, tucks it up under his arm, falls to the floor, rolls over and sticks his four feet into the air.* CHU-PO *stands back, the victor. The* PROPERTY MAN *hurries in from the left. He carries a large red cloth which he spreads over the prostrate figure of the slain monster, then withdraws.* CHU-PO *lifts his arms and starts toward* FAH. *Suddenly there is a roll of thunder and the whole scene is plunged into utter darkness. The* DRAGON, *taking up the sword and red cloth, hurries from the stage. Lightning flashes. Thunder rolls. There is the sound of the Willow Plate being smashed into a thousand pieces . . . then all is quiet. The lights come up gradually. The Willow Plate has been rolled away and is no longer visible.* FAH *and* CHU-PO *are on their knees, arms stretched out before them, foreheads touching the floor. The* PROPERTY MAN *hurries in from the left and walks to the edge of the stage. He pushes back his hood, removes his gloves, bows and addresses the audience.*]

PROPERTY MAN. Marvel of marvels! Day of days! Happy moment! The echo of the battle in the Celestial region against the evil spirits has shaken the Willow Plate from its place and shattered it into a thousand bits. Thus Virtue triumphs over Evil! Cheng Loy Fah and Mung Chu-po are no longer prisoners on a painted plate. They are again human beings, even as you and I. [*His voice changes*]. But, as you shall see presently, most honorable audience, they must pass through many tribulations before they reach the place of ultimate happiness. [*He*

*pulls up his hood, puts on his mittens and withdraws. The gong is struck three times.* A MANDARIN OF THE SAPPHIRE BUTTON *enters from the left. In his right hand he holds a whip and is followed by a man, his* BODY GUARD, *carrying a banner inscribed with Chinese characters. He gallops back and forth across the stage several times, doing a pantomime of riding. At last he stops near the center of the stage, throws his leg high in the air and goes through the business of dismounting his horse, then hands the whip and imaginary reins to the other man. The* MANDARIN *pivots on one foot, takes out a large fan, which is carried at the back of his neck, flips it open and bows.*]

THE MANDARIN. Take my horse away. Wait for me under the pine tree. [*The* BODY GUARD *goes galloping out, left.*] Honorable audience, I am a Mandarin of the Sapphire Button. Long and hard have I ridden for I am come from the Province of Lein Ning on the distant banks of the Pei-kiang. I have come to take young my Lord back to the country of his ancestors. [*He cups his hand to his mouth and calls.*] Mung Chu-po! Mung Chu-po! [CHU-PO *slowly rises to his feet.*]

CHU-PO. Who calls my name? [FAH *also slowly rises and, standing apart, looks on with wide-eyed amazement. The* MANDARIN *bows before* MUNG CHU-PO.]

THE MANDARIN. Young my Lord, it is I, a Mandarin of the Sapphire Button who called your name. I have been sent by your venerable father, the Prince, to lead you home.

CHU-PO [*passing his hand before his eyes.*] The storm has left me prostrate upon the ground. My head reels. What is this you say, my father lives?

THE MANDARIN [*handing* CHU-PO *a yellow paper stamped with red seals*]. Young my Lord, for many years you have been a prisoner; your venerable father, the Prince, has aged in sorrow but now that you are again free his heart has grown light. He awaits your home-coming anxiously and implored me to make all haste.

CHU-PO [*unrolling the scroll*]. Where is my home?

THE MANDARIN. In the Province of Lein Ning on the banks of the Pei-kiang.

CHU-PO [*he studies the paper a moment*]. Slowly . . . slowly my memory returns.

THE MANDARIN [*bowing*]. Young my Lord. . . .

CHU-PO [*excitedly*]. Tell me, in the land of my venerable father, are there crimson-roofed pagodas against blue hills . . . rice fields bending under wind . . . green forests of bamboo?

THE MANDARIN. Even so, young my Lord.

CHU-PO [*carried away*]. And low canals with crowded junks?

THE MANDARIN. All these, young my Lord.

CHU-PO. How far from here lives my venerable father?

THE MANDARIN. A distant journey hence for we must cross the treacherous, snow-crowned peaks of the high Funiu-shan Mountains. But once we have conquered their dizzy heights the way is easy and happiness lies beyond.

CHU-PO. We shall start the homeward journey at once. Leave me for a little time.

THE MANDARIN. Young my Lord, I shall await your pleasure under the pine tree. [*He bows and withdraws.* CHU-PO *turns and hurries to* FAH.]

CHU-PO [*holding out the yellow paper*]. Look! Look! You know?

FAH. I have heard what the messenger of your venerable father said.

CHU-PO. We shall start for the home of my venerable father at once. O my Love, henceforth it shall be our home. The prison days are ended . . . we shall go hand in hand to the river's edge and be one with the singing birds there . . . our songs shall mingle with theirs.

FAH [*the scroll slips from her hand*]. Our little hour of happiness has spent itself . . . you to go, me to remain.

CHU-PO [*closer*]. What is this you say to your miserable slave? Look at me, Fah. What are you saying?

FAH [*her eyes downcast*]. I cannot. To look into the sun is to blind one's self. You, my Lord, have been the sun of my life.

CHU-PO [*perplexed*]. You cannot mean you will not return with me?

FAH. My willing feet would follow in the path you make but . . . but . . . how shall the drooping lotus bargain with the sender of the rain?

CHU-PO. What happiness is there in life without you beside me?

FAH [*slowly lifting her eyes to his*]. You forget, my Lord. Once we were but patterns on a Willow Plate, but we are now human beings and you have looked upon my face unveiled.

CHU-PO. What matters that? I love you.

FAH [*softly*]. And I love you, Chu-po . . . always and always. Oh, leave me quickly so that your going be less painful! There is no other way for us. There are duties which are stronger even than love. I have heard the message from your venerable father which the Mandarin of the Sapphire Button brought. You, my Lord, are the son of a Prince while I . . . I . . .

CHU-PO. You are the one I love better than life!

FAH. Your duty to your venerable father . . . to your family . . . to your honorable and august ancestors comes before all else. Noble blood runs through your veins but who knows what heritage I have? [*Shaking her head.*] No; they will not let us be together. They would send me away from you. A second parting is always crueler than a first. Those of noble blood, my Lord, cannot marry whom they choose . . . you must go back and take for bride the one who is the choice of your venerable father.

CHU-PO [*he turns away and moves to the center of the stage*]. O miserable plight! Thus am I torn between love and filial duty! [*The gong is struck three times. Two* FLOWER GIRLS *enter from the left and move across to* FAH. *They kow-tow before her.*]

First Flower Girl. May we make bold to address thee, Lady?

Second Flower Girl. We have brought little colored gifts for our Lady.

Fah. What means this?

First Flower Girl [*she hangs a red robe from* Fah's *shoulders*]. The marriage of Mung Chu-po and Cheng Loy Fah has been arranged by their honorable parents. [Chu-po *turns and stands looking on.*]

Second Flower Girl [*arranging flowers in* Fah's *hair*]. Flowers for the bride's hair, my Lady. [*They kow-tow and go out, left.*]

Chu-po. I have heard, O jade like! It is you and I who are to be married. [*He runs across and falls to his knees before her.*]

Fah [*whispering*]. My heart is too full . . . there is no room for words.

Chu-po. Come. [*He takes her by the hand and leads her off, right. The gong is struck three times. The* Property Man, *carrying a wooden chair, hurries in from the left; he puts it down in the middle of the stage, picks up the scroll, rolls it up and tucks it in his belt then moves to the edge of the stage where he pushes back his hood, removes his mittens and bows three times before he speaks.*]

Property Man. Honorable audience. You have seen Mung Chu-po and Cheng Loy Fah re-united in happiness but before they can reach the Province of Lein Ning they must first pass over the treacherous heights of the Fu-niu-shan Mountains. [*He pulls up his hood, puts on his mittens, bows and moves behind the chair which he placed near the middle of the stage. From the folds of his coat he takes out a bag containing bits of white paper. In a matter of fact way he tosses handful after handful of the paper in the air so that it floats down over the chair, and makes a hissing sound of wind through his teeth. As each character reaches the summit of the mountain the "snow" falls a little heavier. The gong is struck three times. The* Man-

DARIN OF THE SAPPHIRE BUTTON, *followed by his* BODY GUARD *who still carries his banner, enters from the left. With all seriousness they move to the chair, scramble over it and go out, right. The two* FLOWER GIRLS *follow; once they are over the chair they stop to shake the snow from their clothes, take bright colored flowers from their wide sleeves and scatter them along the way as they go out, right.* FAH *and* CHU-PO *follow. Slowly they move to the chair. He stands below and assists her over.*]

FAH. The wintry blasts from the mountain side cuts like a knife against my hands and face.

CHU-PO. Be brave, little white bird. [*As they reach the flower-strewn path* CHU-PO *stands and points.*]

FAH. I see! I see!

CHU-PO. The mountains are behind us now . . . our feet are on the flowery path.

FAH [*softly*]. Yes, O my Chu-po, we have set our feet upon the path which leads to happiness. [*With his arm about her* MUNG CHU-PO *leads the girl out, right. The gong is struck and the tempo of its beat grows faster and faster until the curtains are drawn.* NOTE: *If a more elaborate ending is desired* MUNG CHU-PO *and* CHENG LOY FAH *may be met by their respective parents and a bridal procession.* FAH *is seated in a bridal chair and, with* CHU-PO *at her side, carried back and forth across the stage several times and then out through the audience. The procession includes:* GONG-BEARERS, *striking their gongs in a rhythmic beat,* BANNERMEN, DWARF-TREE-BEARERS, CAGE-BEARERS, *each with a bamboo cage,* FAN-BEARERS, LANTERN-BEARERS, INCENSE-BEARERS, SOLDIERS *and* SERVANTS, *each carrying long strips of colored silk.*]

# THE SANCTUARY KNOCKER*

By

ALICE JOHNSTONE WALKER

* A five-dollar royalty is asked for each performance to be paid to the author, 97 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn.

## CHARACTERS

WARDEN, *of Stratford Church*
BAILIFF, *of Clopton Manor, Stratford*
MADGE, *of the copse of Clopton Manor*
HAL, *her son, of Clopton Manor*
GAFFER MYLES, *of Clopton Manor*
HODGE, JOCK } *foresters of Clopton Manor*
PETER, PAUL, ROY, MORGAN } *chorister boys connected with Stratford Church*

## HISTORICAL NOTE

In "Stratford on Avon" by Harold Baker, one finds the following references to the Sanctuary Knocker.

"The church has large folding doors opening from the porch to the north aisle. . . . The left door still carries a fine old closing ring, much older than the doors, on the style of the thirteenth century . . . popularly described as 'a sanctuary knocker.' . . . Every church, churchyard and cemetery were sanctuaries and once within the churchyard enclosure a fugitive from justice was safe for forty days. . . . Then the offender had to take the high road to the nearest seaport."

The innocent took refuge in churches; for example Thomas à Becket and Edward IV's widow with the youngest of the little princes. Sanctuary was respected by the wildest and wickedest. We are told that one reason for the misery in Stephen's reign was that "they spared neither church nor churchyard."

Sidney Lee in his "Stratford on Avon" speaks of John of Stratford founding a chapter of priests for a chantry, in St. Thomas's chapel in the south aisle, one of whom was to be warden. Later Ralph Collingwood improved the church service by appointing "four children choiristers." These children should always come by two and two together into the choir . . . at dinner and supper they should wait at table . . . after dinner they should go to the singing school. . . . That they were to retire in winter time at eight of the clock, and in summer at nine . . . and that before they did put off their clothes they should all say the prayer of De Profundis with a loud voice . . . and afterwards say thus, 'God have mercy on the soul of Ralph Collingwood, our Founder.' . . ."

Clopton Manor is about a mile from the Stratford church. It was obtained by Robert of Clopton in 1228. The family were benefactors of the church and the town. There is a Clopton Chapel in the church given by Sir Hugh Clopton and "the great and sumptuous bridge upon the Avon" was built by him and enough of it is still standing to prove the thoroughness with which its foundations were laid.

# THE SANCTUARY KNOCKER

## Scene I

*The time of the play is in the Middle Ages.*

*The first scene is laid in a little clearing in the forest of the Lord of Clopton's Manor near Stratford on Avon. It is morning.*

*Branches and bushes reach on to the stage thickly left and right and hang down from above across the stage. Entrances left and right. A dark green background indicates the deep forest.*

Gaffer Myles' *voice is heard off stage singing to himself.*

Gaffer Myles [*sings*]:

A fox went out one moonshiny night;
The wind blew high and the snow lay light;
"Oh, ho!" quoth the fox, "that I might go right,
Until I come to the town O!"

[*Enter* Gaffer, *a merry-faced old man, his hands full of nets to catch rabbits. The snares are tucked inside his doublet. He begins to straighten them out and put them in order. He gets laboriously on his knees and examines the ground; continues to sing.*]

The fox he came to the farmer's yard.
"Good ducks and geese be not afeard
For the best of you all shall grease my beard
Ere I . . .

[*He hears voices and hastily snatching up his snares and stuffing them inside his doublet he hides behind a tree right front. Enter* Madge *and her son* Hal. Madge *has a basket*

*in which she has been gathering roots and herbs.* HAL *has a long bow.*]

HAL [*eagerly*]. It was a wolf, Mother, that killed our sheep. I know it. I tell thee I saw his tracks!

MADGE [*sits on a stump and examines the contents of her basket*]. It is many a year since a wolf has been seen in these woods, Hal. The foresters would smile if thou saidst "Wolf" to them.

HAL. Let them! I'll laugh when I shoot the rascal and nail his head over the old door at Stratford Church. The footprints I saw were made by no dog. Mother, thou must not doubt me! [*Excitedly.*]

MADGE. I do not doubt thee, Hal. Thou art sure the marks are not those of a dog. But hast thou seen these prints elsewhere?

HAL. I am off now to look for his tracks by the pool. I'll be ready for him! [*Twangs bow string.*]

MADGE [*laughing*]. Boy, boy! I am almost afraid to be gathering simples alone. . . . We're not alone, here comes the Bailiff and two of his men. [*Enter* BAILIFF *of Clopton Manor with dead hares in his hand.* JOCK *and* HODGE *his foresters are at his heels, armed with long bows.*]

BAILIFF [*to* HAL]. Halt, lad, I'll have a word with thee. Hast thou been stealing his lordship's hares? I'll have thy ears for this if I can prove it on thee. [*He grasps* HAL'S *shoulders.*]

HAL. I have laid no snares, Sir Bailiff. I would not harm my Lord Clopton's game. Unhand me, sir!

BAILIFF. What is thy business here in the forest? Thou art up to some trick, I'll be bound, with thy long bow. Perhaps it's a deer thou art after. If I catch thee killing a Clopton deer 'twill go hard with thee.

HAL [*trying to pull free*]. I know nought of hare or deer, Sir Bailiff, I'm in the wood to hunt a wolf.

HODGE and JOCK. A wolf! A wolf?

BAILIFF [*in his amazement releasing* HAL]. A wolf? Is the boy a fool?

MADGE. One of our sheep was killed and the lad insists that the tracks are not those of a dog, Sir Bailiff.

BAILIFF. Where? In the high Common? [HAL *nods.*] Humph. . . . 'Twas the miller's dog. He shall be watched. But I'll not be put off, I'll find out who is setting these snares in my lord's woods and baste his back well. Remember that, thou wolf hunter! Come, lads, mayhap you'll find a wolf in Clopton Woods.

HODGE. A wolf! [*Laughs.*]

JOCK. We'll hunt a wolf! [*Laughs.* BAILIFF, HODGE *and* JOCK *go off right laughing.* HAL *and* MADGE *follow them with indignant glances.*]

MADGE. The Bailiff is an unjust man. I fear him.

HAL [*rubs his shoulder angrily*]. The great bully! I know who lays those snares. It is Gaffer Myles, but I won't tell on him.

MADGE. Why is the Bailiff so determined to find thee in the wrong?

HAL. He is fretted over this rabbit snaring and would lay the blame on someone.

MADGE. I like it not. Never let him lay hands on thee. If thou shoot a deer now he would take thy life. Use the long bow warily, my Hal! Suppose now by a mischance thou shouldst shoot a deer?

HAL. Oh, Mother! I know the difference between a gray wolf and a red deer!

MADGE. I fear for thee. I fear the Bailiff's gusty temper. He would slay thee in one of his sudden rages. If he charges thee with law breaking, run and lay hold of the Sanctuary Knocker at Stratford Church.

HAL. Stratford Knocker is a mile or more from Clopton Manor. I hope I never have to make a run like that for life with the Bailiff's arrows singing by my ears. [*Laughs and goes out left.*]

MADGE. Ay, laugh, lad, laugh! But many a life has that old knocker saved! [*Picking up basket she strolls off right still looking for herbs.* GAFFER *enters cautiously and begins*

*to pull the snares from his doublet.* MADGE *enters again and* GAFFER *stuffs the nets under his doublet in great confusion.*]

GAFFER. Give thee good-den, Madge of the copse. Thou art far from the village.

MADGE [*surprised at seeing him*]. Marry come up, is it thou, Gaffer Myles! I scarce know thee in that goodly gray hood. Thou art dight like the Bailiff on a feast day.

GAFFER. Her ladyship herself gave it me. She was much beholden for a string of trout I made shift to catch for her.

MADGE [*turns him round admiringly.* GAFFER *makes frantic but fruitless efforts to conceal the nets*]. 'Tis of fine fair cloth and . . . [*A net falls at her feet.*] Why, what's this? [*She seizes it and keeps it when* GAFFER *tries to grab it.*] Why, 'tis a snare for rabbits! Shame on thee, Gaffer! And Lady Maud so good to thee!

GAFFER [*snatches snare from* MADGE]. 'Tis to tie up a bunch of faggots, thou prying puss.

MADGE. 'Tis a snare for wild rabbits!

GAFFER. My Lord and his Lady will never miss a hare or so. Old Myles knows where to place these little snares. No one will spy them.

MADGE. The Bailiff has spied them! Look out for thy ears! Out upon thee to let the Bailiff suspect innocent lads like my Hal!

GAFFER. Nay, Madge, no harm shall befall Hal. But . . . he, he, he! The Bailiff has sent me out to catch him the thief! [*Slaps his leg with delight.*] Old Gaffer is to find out the poacher. Ha, ha, ha! [*Laughs.*]

MADGE [*calling back as she goes out right*]. Thou wilt be caught yet, mark my words. Thou hoary old rogue!

GAFFER [*looking after her*]. She's gone at last, plague take her! Looking for simples in such a proper place to lay snares. [*He begins examining the ground, crawling around on his knees and making excursions into the bushes left and right. Sometimes he disappears from sight but*

*you hear his voice.*] There's a footprint . . . another . . . near by will be his hole. . . . [*He disappears left.*] Ay, here it is. . . . I'll trap a mort of hares. . . . Oh! Who hit me? [*He staggers back to center of stage holding on to an arrow that has pierced his gray hood and is apparently firmly embedded in his skull.*] I'm slain! [*Falls. Pause. Some distance off* HAL'S *voice is heard.*]

HAL [*off stage right*]. Ooooo-oooo! Mother! Moth-er! I've—shot—the—wolf. . . . Hoo-ooo! Moth-er!

MADGE [*off the stage*]. Hal! What say! Ha-al!

HAL [*shouting*]. I've—slain—the—wolf! [*His voice is nearer.*] Near the old oak. Hasten! [*He is heard crashing through the bushes.*] Here he is. [*Enters. He almost steps on* GAFFER *and recoils with horror.*] Gaffer Myles, slain? . . . By me?

MADGE [*outside*]. Where art thou, Hal? What a to do! [*Enters.*] Where is thy wolf?

HAL [*points a trembling hand at* GAFFER]. 'Twas Gaffer! Oh, Mother! Did I kill him? Is he dead? [*He falls on his knees at* GAFFER'S *side. Feels of the arrow.*] Ay, 'tis my arrow. [*In a voice of agony.*] It's gone clean through his head. I cannot pluck it out.

MADGE [*gets down on her knees on* GAFFER'S *other side*]. Oh, Hal, how did this happen? Woe is me!

HAL. Why, I had just found fresh wolf tracks and at that same moment I heard a stirring in the bushes and saw something move gray and low. I was sure it was the wolf and I let my bolt fly. . . . Oh, Gaffer! Poor Gaffer! [*Buries his face in his hands. The voice of the* BAILIFF *and his men are heard.* MADGE *rises and looks through the trees.*]

MADGE [*in great distress*]. Alack! Alack! The Bailiff comes! Run, Hal! Seek sanctuary! He will not believe thee, run!

HAL. Nay, I will bide and tell him the truth. [*Enter* HODGE *and* JOCK.]

HODGE. What's all this? . . . [*Sees* GAFFER.] Sir Bailiff, Gaffer is dead.

JOCK [*pointing to* HAL'S *arrow*]. Hal hath shot Gaffer!

HODGE. Gaffer is slain! Gaffer is slain! [*Enter* BAILIFF.]

BAILIFF [*angrily*]. Gaffer . . . Gaffer Myles slain?

JOCK. Ay, Hal's arrow is through his pate. [*Points to arrow.*]

BAILIFF. Thou coward! A poor old soul like Gaffer. Why didst thou shoot him?

HAL. I was not shooting at him. I saw a gray body crouching in the bushes. I took him for the wolf.

BAILIFF [*impatiently*]. A wolf, forsooth! Enough of such false tales. [*Threateningly.*] He had found thy snares for rabbits and 'twas for that thou didst murder him.

HAL. No, no, Sir Bailiff . . . I . . .

BAILIFF [*to foresters*]. Seize him, seize him, men!

MADGE [*throwing herself in front of* HAL]. Nay, Sir Bailiff, it is the truth. Hal has just found more tracks.

BAILIFF. Seize the murderer! [HODGE *and* JOCK *seize* HAL.]

MADGE [*desperately*]. Run, Hal, seek sanctuary. Run to the Stratford Knocker. [HAL *wrenches himself free and dashes off.* HODGE *falls and knocks down* JOCK.]

BAILIFF. Shoot men, shoot him as he runs! [*The foresters scramble to their feet and prepare to shoot.* MADGE *stretches out her arms before the archers and screams after* HAL.]

MADGE. Run, Hal. Seek sanctuary! Seek sanctuary!

BAILIFF [*drags her to one side*]. Let fly, men! [HODGE *and* JOCK *shoot. All lean toward left watching arrows.*] The rogue escaped! [*Furious.*] Chase him! Let him not reach Stratford Church. After him, you clumsy louts. [HODGE, JOCK *and* BAILIFF *rush out left followed by* MADGE *sobbing and calling. From outside their voices come back fainter and fainter.*]

MADGE [*outside*]. Run, Hal, run for thy life. The Knocker! Reach the Knocker!

BAILIFF. After him, Hodge. Jock! Jock!

JOCK. There he goes, Sir Bailiff.

HODGE. Catch him! Stop him! [*Silence. Pause. A sigh is heard.* GAFFER *moves his hands, he lifts his head, it falls back. He slowly sits up; looks about him; rubs his head; feels arrow.*]

GAFFER [*astonished*]. An arrow? Through my new hood! Who hath done this? [*He pulls back his hood and shows the arrow sticking in a thick chunk of brown bread.*] And through my hunk of bread too, the rascal! [*He looks indignantly from the hole in the bread to the hole in his hood. He feels his head.*] Bless me if he did not scratch my head too! If I catch him, I'll thump him soundly. I'll . . . I'll . . . [*He sees and hears something to his left. He crawls with great caution forward left. He sees something that makes him shrink back and tremble. He crawls backward in a terrible panic and seizing his stick hobbles off left with great stealth and in desperate haste.*]

[CURTAIN]

## SCENE II

*The scene is laid in the churchyard of the Church at Stratford on Avon. About twenty minutes has elapsed since the last scene. A few table-tombstones and other old stones are in the foreground. The double door of the Stratford Church is seen in the background. A conspicuous knocker is on one door.*

*Four little boys in the costumes of choristers are sitting or leaning on the tombstones.*

PAUL [*plaintively to* PETER]. If thou hadst sung true we would not have to practice that chant again, Peter.

ROY. Thou duffer! No fishing in the Avon for any of us to-day! But practice, practice until our throats crack.

MORGAN. Thou hast no more ear for a tune than a night jar. Listen, 'tis like this: [*He sings with emphasis and beats time with vigor in front of the somewhat bored* PETER.] "Laudate Dominum omnes gentes, laudate cum omnes populi."

PETER [*sings out of tune. He is seated on tombstone.*]. "Laudate Dominum omnes gentes, laudate cum omnes populi."

PAUL, ROY and MORGAN [*impatiently*]. No, no, lad! . . . Listen. . . . Like this. [*They sing chant all through.*]

"Laudate Dominum omnes gentes, laudate cum omnes populi
Quoniam confirmata est supernos misericordia ejus,
Et veritas Domini monet in æternum.
Sicut erat in principio et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.*

PAUL. Sing softly and the Warden will not mark thee next time. This old knocker sings truer than thou. Hark! [*Sings and beats time with knocker.*] "Lau-da-te Dominum om-nes gentes."

ROY, MORGAN and PETER [*rush to stop him*]. Don't, don't, don't!

PAUL. Prithee, why not?

PETER. He is from Coventry. How should he know about our Sanctuary knocker?

ROY. It is only touched by some fugitive from justice. Someone who is being chased by cruel enemies and who knocks for safety at the Church door.

PAUL. And durst no one drag him away from the knocker?

MORGAN. No one. He is in Sanctuary, he is sheltered by the Church.

PETER. If he is innocent he hath time to prove it.

ROY. And if he is an evil doer he hath his life but must leave the land in forty days.

* The music for this chant appears on page 249.

PAUL. Would that a fugitive came now!

PETER. Then I would not have to practice. [*Sings.*] "Lau-da-te Domin-um om-nes." . . .

MORGAN [*interrupts*]. That would be rare sport! I see it all. Galloping horses . . . shouting men . . . a breathless wight gasping and reaching for the knocker . . . then I would step nobly before the raging pursuer and exclaim, "Hold, varlet! In the name of the Church!" [*He makes a noble gesture.*]

PETER, PAUL and ROY [*laughing*]. Ho, ho, ho! Who would heed a little cock like thee. Ha, ha, ha! [*An arrow falls between them on the ground. Another whizzes by them. The four seek shelter behind stones and after a pause peer to the left from behind stones.*]

ALL THE BOYS. What is it! . . . Arrows? [*Shout.*] Sir Warden! Help! Sir Warden! [*Enter* HAL *wild and exhausted; his breath comes in loud gasps. He stumbles forward and clings to the knocker.*]

HAL [*cries hoarsely*]. Sanctuary! [*He sinks half unconscious to the ground clinging by one hand to knocker.*]

PETER [*peering over a stone*]. A fugitive!

ROY. The arrows were for him! Where is the Warden?

MORGAN and PAUL [*Shout*]. Sir Warden! Sir Warden!

PETER [*drawing nearer* HAL]. Why, he's a lad, can he be a murderer?

HAL [*between gasps*]. I . . . am . . . no . . . mur . . . der . . . er. . . .

ROY. Thou art safe, boy.

PETER [*looking left*]. Here come thy pursuers, but thou art safe. [*The chorister boys draw up in front of* HAL. *They shout*]: "Warden! Sir Warden, haste! [*Enter* BAILIFF, HODGE *and* JOCK *completely out of breath and angry.*]

BAILIFF [*out of breath*]. Too late! He's safe! The murderer!

HODGE [*flinging down his bow angrily*]. Never did I aim so carefully. Maledictions on the fleetfooted knave!

JOCK [*to* HODGE]. Twice I would have had him but for thy clumsy head [*gasps*] forever . . . in . . . my way.

BAILIFF. Bunglers! [*Hits* JOCK *and* HODGE *with staff.*] You let him escape, the rascal!

JOCK. Alas, poor Gaffer Myles! Let me at him! I'll soon pull him away from the knocker. [*Starts towards* HAL.]

HAL [*faintly*]. I claim . . . sanctu . . . ary!

CHORISTERS. Touch him not! Sir Warden, Sir Warden!

BAILIFF [*grabs* JOCK *by shoulder*]. Nay, lad, art thou mad? He is safe for now but when he leaves the churchyard, a gray goose shaft shall find his heart. [*The* CHORISTERS *have thrown their arms around each other's shoulders to make a protection for* HAL. *They are looking eagerly to left and right for the* WARDEN. *They now see him coming right front. They cry*] The Warden comes! Sir Warden! A fugitive! Sir Warden! [*Enter the* WARDEN, *a grave and impressive churchman. He stands with folded arms eyeing the groups before him. The* BAILIFF *restraining the two foresters and* HAL *protected by the four* CHORISTERS.]

WARDEN [*severely*]. What meaneth this turmoil?

CHORISTERS [*step forward to meet him*]. A fugitive! . . . Sir Warden. . . . He's innocent. He seeks sanc . . .

WARDEN [*stepping to center near* HAL]. Peace, babes!

BAILIFF. The fellow is a murderer, Sir Warden.

HODGE. He killed old Gaffer Myles.

JOCK. He can't deny it, Sir Warden.

HAL [*standing but holding to knocker*]. I am innocent of murder. 'Twas not at Gaffer I shot but at a wolf. I claim s . . .

BAILIFF [*interrupting*]. 'Tis false! This Hal hath laid snares for my Lord Clopton's rabbits. Gaffer found him out and Hal killed Gaffer to stop his tongue. The villain is a thief as well as a murderer.

WARDEN. What hast thou to say, lad?

HAL [*earnestly*]. I laid no snares in my Lord Clopton's woods. Gaffer knew no ill of me. Why should I kill him?

WARDEN. Didst thou kill him?

HAL [*hiding face in hands*]. Alas, alas! I did.

BAILIFF [*triumphantly*]. What did I tell thee, Sir Warden? With an arrow through his pate, the coward!

WARDEN. Peace, Bailiff. [*To* HAL.] How did that chance?

HAL. One of our sheep had been killed by some animal and the footprints about were not those of a dog. By the pool in the deep wood I came on these same tracks again. Even as I found them I heard up the glade a sly rustling. Something big and gray was moving stealthily close to the ground.

WARDEN. Couldst thou discern the color so far away?

HAL. Ay, Sir Warden, the sun shone right down on the head and it looked silver gray. I let fly my arrow, the creature rolled over and I called my mother that I had killed a wolf.

CHORISTER [*in delighted terror*]. A wolf!

BAILIFF. Didst thy Reverence ever hear such a flimsy tale? Wolf! By St. Dunstan there's no wolf been seen in these parts for full ten year.

JOCK. Not for ten year.

HODGE. Not for twenty year.

WARDEN. 'Tis true and his head was nailed over this door. Yet the lad tells a straight tale. . . . 'Tis passing strange.

BAILIFF [*contemptuously*]. Ay, 'tis so strange that I'll agree to eat every wolf's head that this Hal nails up here!

MADGE [*outside*]. Hal, Hal! Art thou safe?

HAL. Here, Mother, I am safe.

MADGE [*enters left, breathless*]. Oh, my child! Thank God! I was sick with fear. I could scarce run. Oh! [*Gasps for breath.*] And have they heard thy tale and art thou free to go?

HAL. No, Mother, the Bailiff still thinks I slew Gaffer.

He insists Gaffer had found out 'twas I laid the snares and 'twas for that I shot him.

MADGE [*indignant and still breathless*]. Thou, thou lay snares! 'Twas Gaffer laid the snares.

BAILIFF. Silence, woman! Our trusty old Gaffer!

MADGE [*laughs scornfully*]. "Trusty old Gaffer," is it? Why, this very morning I surprised him hiding a bundle of snares so big under his doublet. My eyes at first were on his new gray hood and cape that my Lady had made him. I turned him around the better to admire it and down around his feet tumbled the mass of nets he was hiding and silly enough he looked! "Shame upon thee, Gaffer," I cried, "to steal from the good Sir Harry!" "Gramacy, he'll not grudge *me* a hare or two," says he and . . .

BAILIFF [*interrupts*]. Sir Warden, do not believe her. She is the lad's mother. [*To* MADGE.] 'Tis ill to speak against the dead who cannot defend himself.

MADGE. I speak to save the living who is foully accused.

GAFFER [*outside*]. Help, help! Wolves, wolves! May St. Dunstan preserve me! Bailiff!

FORESTERS [*startled, look at each other and then run out*]. Who calleth?

HAL and MADGE [*surprised*]. Whose voice was that? [BAILIFF *gives a start and looks eagerly left.*]

CHORISTERS [*looking right*]. 'Tis an old man.

FORESTERS [*outside, with joy and wonder*]. Gaffer Myles! Gaffer!

WARDEN, BAILIFF, HAL and MADGE. Gaffer! Gaffer alive! [*Enter* FORESTERS *leading* GAFFER.]

FORESTERS. Here is Gaffer alive.

ALL [*in a tumult of joy and surprise*]. Gaffer alive! Gaffer alive!

GAFFER [*gasps*]. Ay, to be sure alive but near dead too, what with arrows through my hood and my bread and my head. [*Runs to* BAILIFF.] Oh, Sir Bailiff, get the dogs and the spears! I was near eat by a wolf as large as an ox. We must get him.

HAL [*embracing* GAFFER]. Oh, dear Gaffer! Art thou indeed alive? My arrow did not hurt thee?

GAFFER. 'Twas thou, Hal, that spoiled my new hood and scratched me the crown of my pate. I'll deal thee a buffet for it thou'll not soon forget. [*Gasps for breath.*] But not now, we must after the wolf.

WARDEN. And where didst thou see the wolf?

GAFFER. In the copse, near the pond. Not a stone's throw, Sir Warden, from where I lay my rabbit snares.

BAILIFF [*with a roar of rage*]. Ho! Lay thy rabbit snares, forsooth! Now at last I know thee for the rogue thou art.

GAFFER [*clapping his hand over his mouth in consternation at what he has just said, dodges nimbly behind the* CHORISTERS]. Oh, Sweet Bailiff! Oh . . .

BAILIFF [*walks angrily back and forth*]. Let me at him!

GAFFER. Oh, sweet Sir Bailiff! Have mercy on an old man! Pardon thy poor old Gaffer!

BAILIFF. I'll have thy ears, thou false-tongued knave, Lord Clopton wilt have thy nose, and my Lady will give thee nought but sour black bread.

GAFFER [*falls on his knees*]. I only caught a few hares, Sir Bailiff; only a few little ones. My stomach will not brook black bread. 'Twas only for my health I took a little rabbit meat.

BAILIFF. Thou art a flap-eared hound! I will have thee flogged from here to the stocks where thou shalt spend a month cooling thy heels.

GAFFER. Ay, my precious and worshipful Sir Bailiff, put me a month in the stocks. But first, I pray thee, let us be off to catch that wolf. A monster! A prodigious beast! [*The* FORESTERS *and* CHORISTERS *gather around* GAFFER *who talks "wolf" to them.*]

WARDEN. Be not so severe on Gaffer, Sir Bailiff, thy hasty temper has led thee this day into a darker crime than purloining rabbits. 'Tis only by God's mercy that thou standest there guiltless of Hal's life.

BAILIFF. I know it, I know it, Sir Warden and I am humble with shame and full of gratitude to God. [*Kneels.*]

WARDEN. Remember this day then, my son [*lays hand on* BAILIFF'S *shoulder*] the next time one of thy black rages blinds thee to truth and reason.

BAILIFF [*rises*]. I will try to, your worship. [*Turns to* HAL *with outstretched hand.*] I crave thy pardon, lad and thine, Madge. I was shrewdly vexed and puzzled by Gaffer's pilfering. I need a new forester. Wouldst thou like to be my Lord Clopton's man?

HAL. I thank thee, Sir Bailiff, I will right gladly become one of Lord Clopton's foresters.

MADGE. My son a forester!

BAILIFF. Then 'tis agreed, boy, and the wolf head money shall be thine too. Thou canst pull a long bow for one so young. See that thou aimst as true at Sir Wolf as thou didst at Gaffer. [*The* BAILIFF, WARDEN, HAL *and* MADGE *talk together.*]

PETER. And will the Bailiff eat the wolf's head when Hal shoots it?

PAUL [*laughing*]. Hold thy tongue!

PETER. He said he would, I heard him!

PAUL [*giggling with the other boys*]. Peace, thou lambkin!

GAFFER. And so it was through Sir Wolf I got me this arrow through my hood! I thank this tough hunk of bread that saved my pate.

HAL. I am thankful to that hunk of bread too, good Gaffer.

BAILIFF. And I thank Heaven that I am not guilty of an innocent lad's death.

MADGE [*earnestly as she points to the knocker*]. And I thank God for the Sanctuary Knocker.

[CURTAIN]

## COSTUMES

The Warden's gown is like a college gown in cut. It is of a dull blue. The narrow white muslin collar band has tabs in front. His cap is a big black velvet "Tam."

The Chorister boy's costume is a long, bright blue garment fitted at the waist and flaring at the ankles. It has a narrow belt. A row of white buttons closely sewed together runs from chin to ankle. White collar band like Warden's.

The Bailiff has a sleeveless tunic of a rich, bright green, open at the throat and laced up the front; shirt and tights of rich tan. The brim of his hat is turned up at back and sides making a long point in front. A jeweled pin fastens a long quill on one side. He has high soft shoes rolled over at the top. (These are made of men's socks dyed to match the tights.)

The Foresters are dressed in dull green tunics with shirts and tights of dull red or brown. Tight pointed hoods frame the face and fasten under the chin; a quill sticks out of the top of the hood. (See Howard Pyle's *Robin Hood.*) Their feet and legs are wound with bands that look like leather. They carry long bows and quivers.

Hal is dressed in two shades of brown, sleeveless tunic over light brown shirt, brown tights, belt, laced legs, hat like Bailiff's of dull yellow.

Gaffer's dark green, loose tunic is split up at the sides and belted in. He is not dapper like the foresters. His hood is gray, bright and new, and big enough at the top to serve as lunch basket; it is fastened tight under his chin. A round short, gray cape barely covers shoulders.

Madge wears a tight-fitting bodice of dull red, long sleeves, laced up the front, and full skirt of same color, ankle length black stockings cut off to look like loose shoes. Her close-fitted hood and little cape are of black or white.

## DIRECTIONS FOR SCENERY

The background for Scene I is a dark green drop (A) with trunks of trees of brown and gray of paper. Green boughs and bushes are placed at both sides of the stage, and leafy twigs are suspended from a wire stretched lengthwise over the middle of the stage just above the actors' heads. Drop "A" divides in the middle and is drawn apart in Scene II far enough to disclose the church door on the gray church wall of Drop "B."

Scene II. For door of Stratford Church make a pointed doorway and double or single door of brown paper cambric. Indicate carving with red and yellow chalk. Mount door in center of narrow drop (B) of gray paper cambric. Gray to frame it on three sides, bottom of door on stage level. Square off the gray like stones. A few sprays of ivy crawl up the gray church wall or drop down from above. These can be made of crêpe paper or drawn on gray drop. Hang Drop "B" next to back wall. (Door is not opened.)

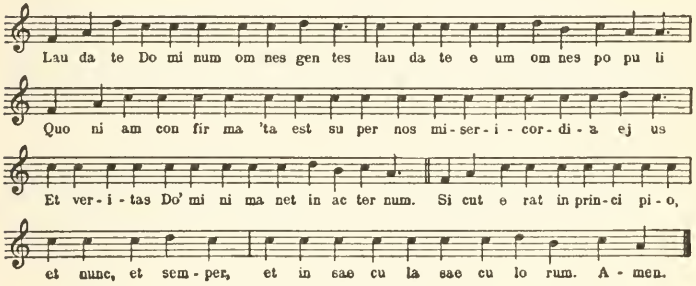
Grave stones are made of gray card-board. They are large enough to conceal the boxes to which they are nailed to keep them erect. Some should be askew and moss covered.

Any large knocker will do for the Sanctuary Knocker. It must be fastened through the door onto the wall or an upright.

The Stratford Knocker or "closing ring" is surrounded by a large disc of bronze held to the door by six big square-headed nails. A grim face, half animal with its broad nose and scant chin, has its teeth clinched to hold the knocker, the big ring that comes out of either cheek.

Puppet makers can produce a most satisfactory effect by making this of plaster of Paris. Holes are left in the cheeks to pass the ring through. The ring is made of rope.

String or wire should be placed in the plaster mould to fasten the head to door. The surrounding disc made of stiff card-board helps hold the head in place. The whole should be bronzed.

Music for the chant which appears on page 240.

Lau da te Do mi num om nes gen tes lau da te e um om nes po pu li
Quo ni am con fir ma 'ta est su per nos mi - ser - i - cor - di - a ej us
Et ver - i - tas Do' mi ni ma net in ac ter num. Si cut e rat in prin - ci pi - o,
et nunc, et sem - per, et in sae cu la sae cu lo rum. A - men.

# THE BOOK OF
# SHAKESPEARE, THE PLAYMAKER *

Written in Collaboration by

TWENTY STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Under the Direction of

PROFESSOR FREDERICK H. KOCH
of the Department of English

Designed for the
SHAKESPEARE TERCENTENARY COMMEMORATION

By
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## THE PLAYERS OF THE MASQUE

THE HERALDS

THE PROLOG, THE INTERLUDE, AND THE EPILOG

THE ASTROLOGER
THE CHORUS OF STARS

THE FIRST PART

SHAKESPEARE
QUEEN ELIZABETH
SENOR MENDOZA
SIR FRANCIS DRAKE
LORD HOWARD
LORD LEICESTER
SIR WALTER RALEIGH
SIR MARTIN FROBISHER
SIR JOHN HAWKINS
LORD CECIL
SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM
THE USHER OF THE BLACK ROD
THE CHIEF STEWARD
THE JESTER
THE FIRST MERCHANT
THE SECOND MERCHANT
THE FIRST SAILOR
WILLIAM NACK, *the Tinker* (Pyramus)
FRANCIS PEER, *the Glover* (Thisbe)
TOMMY SLATS, *the Blacksmith* (Wall)
ALAMON, *the Embalmer* (Moon)
STAR, *the Baker* (Lion)

The Ladies-in-Waiting
The Page to the Queen
The Sailors
The Glovers
The Blacksmiths
The Tinkers
The Bakers
Tony Hempseed, *the Village Crier*
The Queen's Watermen
The Gentleman Pensioners
The Embalmer's Wife
The Merchants' Wives
The Glovers' Wives
The Blacksmiths' Wives
The Tinkers' Wives
The Bakers' Wives
The Children

THE SECOND PART

Shakespeare
Ben Jonson
William Strachey
Sir Thomas Gates
John Oxenham
John Holdsworth
Will Spencer
The Young Townsmen
The Mayor
The Old Man
The Tapster
Tom of Bedlam
John Graham, *the Puritan*
The Ballad Monger
The Puppet Masters
The Constables
The Indians—Marchebenus—Temoweneni
The Interpreter
The Bagpiper

Ferrex
Piretto Cheverette } *the Minstrels of the* Mayor
Robin Hood
Little John
William Stukely
Friar Tuck
Jack-in-the-Green
Much, the Clown
The Hobby-horse
The Dragon
The Alchemist
The Juggler
The Pastry Cooks
The Witch
Maid Marian
Her Attendants
The Gypsies
The Milkmaids
The Foresters
The Morris Dancers
The Farmers
The Farmers' Wives
The Sailors
The Chimney Sweeps
The Children
The Town Ladies
The Town Gentlemen
The Earth Spirits

THE TEMPEST

Prospero
Stephano
Trinculo
Caliban
Ferdinand
Miranda
Ariel
Juno
Ceres
Iris
Sycorax
The Prompters

# SHAKESPEARE, THE PLAYMAKER

*The Masque is announced by three trumpet calls from the* HERALDS

## PROLOG

*Enter the* ASTROLOGER, *an aged man carrying a celestial sphere, attended by a* CHORUS OF STARS

THE CHORUS OF STARS.

Fancy, fancy, sprite divine,
What a magic power is thine!
Thine to bring the distant nigh,
Thine to lift our thoughts on high,
Fancy, fancy, heavenly power,
Grant thy presence for an hour.

THE ASTROLOGER.

O that this palsied tongue could grasp the thoughts
That glow within the fire of one great mind;
And seize them, hurl them broadcast, far and wide,
Enkindling embers, lighting fires anew,
Until the landscape glow with Shakespeare's fame,
As glow the harvest bonfires of the plain
Against the somber dark of earth and sky.
Then should the sluggish, deadened souls of men
Leap to a blaze. But pardon, good folk all,
If our ambition far exceed our power.
We can but strive; you, too, must act the part,
Your own imagination be your slave
And aid you to interpret.
Here behold
Fair Greenwich, with its people gathered all

To meet Elizabeth,—the Empire queen.
Before her gorgeous court a play is staged
The tragic tale of Pyramus and Thisbe,
Written for rude mechanics who mar it so
That tragedy gives place to comedy.
Next see that furious dupe from Philip's court
Repulsed by England's queen; he in defiance
Admitting his defeat, embarks for Spain
To fling upon the seas the anger of his king.
Meanwhile amid these everchanging scenes
Moves Shakespeare, a beginner at his craft,
Gathering the varied strands of human life
Into his wondrous web of poesy.

THE CHORUS OF STARS.

Fancy, fancy, sprite divine,
What a magic power is thine!
Thine to make the past alive,
Thine to make all beauty thrive,
Fancy, fancy, heavenly power,
Grant thy presence for an hour!

THE ASTROLOGER.

And then behold a change! A score of years
Glide in a twinkling by. See Shakespeare, now
A master of his art, at Gravesend Fair
Still gathering threads of fancy and of fact
To weave that lovely tapestry of verse
The Tempest, to which his own prophetic gaze
Looks out across the rolling deep, to this
Fair continent, America, wherein
A newborn race shall rise to praise his name
After three centuries. Such is the spirit
Of the hour, and if we do but give
Some thoughts to seek your pleasure's company
We are content. 'Tis thinking makes life larger,
As playing fills it up; but to find
A grain of truth in fairy nothingness
Is bliss, and gives to play a new dimension.

THE CHORUS OF STARS.

Fancy, fancy, sprite divine,
What a magic power is thine!
Thine to give us visions fair,
Thine to solace toil and care,
Fancy, fancy, heavenly power,
Grant thy presence for an hour!

## THE FIRST PART

TIME—*The summer of 1588, the eve of the Armada.*

SCENE—*Greenwich, a quay on the Thames, and a portion of the old Kent road, near the Castle.*

*Preparations have been made to welcome* QUEEN ELIZABETH *at the quay on her return from London. A temporary throne has been erected at the right, and a partially decorated arch marks the landing place of the royal party.*

*A group of* SAILORS, *a* JESTER, *a number of* TRADESMEN, *and the* VILLAGE FOLK *enter. The* SAILORS *join gayly with the* VILLAGERS *in a lively dance, while the* MERCHANTS *and their* WIVES *look gravely on with evident enjoyment. A representative of each of the trade guilds of the village is to take part in the play "Pyramus and Thisbe" before the* QUEEN. *They now enter, escorted by their respective guilds:* WILLIAM NACK, *costumed as Pyramus, accompanied by the* TINKERS; FRANCIS PIER, *arrayed as Thisbe, with the* GLOVERS; TOMMY SLATS, *the Wall, with the* BLACKSMITHS; STARR, *wrapped in a lion skin, with the* BAKERS; ALAMON, *the* EMBALMER, *as Moonshine; and* TONY HEMPSEED, *the village crier.*

*A company of merry* GIRLS, *their arms filled with garlands, enter and decorate the arch and throne. More* VILLAGERS *enter. Among them is* SHAKESPEARE, *who at this time is about twenty-four years of age. He watches the scene with youthful enthusiasm and inter-*

*est. The* CHIEF STEWARD *of the castle bustles in, very conscious of his own importance. A huge bunch of keys hangs from his girdle, and he carries a very large pen and scroll.*

*The* JESTER *dances merrily down the center of the stage, singing.*

THE JESTER. Oh ho, oh ho! the Queen is coming, the Queen is coming to-day! [*The* CHIEF STEWARD *advances down stage and turns to address the* TOWNS-PEOPLE *who have gathered at the back of the stage, left. As he is about to speak, the* GIRLS *hurriedly finish their decorating and hasten to join the group of* VILLAGERS. *The* JESTER *mingles in the crowd, successfully endeavoring to distract attention from the* STEWARD'S *orders.*]

THE STEWARD. Come, come, we'll have an end of foolishness. Are all acquainted with the words of our song?

THE VILLAGERS. Aye, that we be!

THE JESTER. Forsooth, and have not the verses been posted in the Boar's Head this many a day? [*The* STEWARD *signals for silence, and directs the song, using his quill as a baton.*]

THE VILLAGERS [*sing*].

God save Britannia's queen;
God save her majesty.
Bless e'en the earth beneath her feet;

[*A burst of laughter, occasioned by the* JESTER'S *imitation of the* STEWARD, *interrupts.*]

Bless this her isle, her royal seat;
Let all who hear her name repeat,
God save her majesty.

ALAMON, THE EMBALMER [*to the* STEWARD]. Hark ye, Master Steward, my wife doth have a goodly singing voice —let her then sing this verse alone with the other folk for chorus. [*To his wife.*] Come, Mistress Prudence, and show what thou canst do.

THE STEWARD [*impatiently*]. Good people, we must needs proceed. The time is short.

God save Britannia's Queen,
God save her majesty—

And now the chorus. Tony Hempseed, 'twill go better without your roaring. [TONY HEMPSEED *retires, crestfallen, but when the singing begins again, it is evident that* HEMPSEED'S *inharmonious roaring has covered a multitude of lesser harmonic sins, so at a sign from the* STEWARD *he again joins in.*]

This thronèd isle, this home of kings,
This land where laughter ever rings,
Where every Echo loudly sings,
God save her Majesty.

[*At the conclusion of the song, the* STEWARD *consults his scroll with great ado, and raises his hand for silence.*] And now for the play! Has each come garnished in his proper dress as was instructed? [*Those who are to present the play step forward and bow awkwardly.*] Then go where you will make your entrances. [*The players look about in bewilderment.*]

THE JESTER. And where do be their entrances?

THE STEWARD [*pointing to right entrance*]. There, behind the throne your entrances and exits shall be made.

THE JESTER. Ah, woe is me! For then forsooth the lion will frighten the queen's fair dames.

SHAKESPEARE [*who has been very unobtrusive until this time, approaches the* STEWARD *and speaks most courteously*]. Were it not better your entrances be there? [*Pointing to left entrance.*]

THE FIRST MERCHANT. Well said, and true.

THE STEWARD. 'Tis not well said. None but myself shall decide the setting of this spectacle. Back, thou saucy rogue! [SIR FRANCIS DRAKE *and* HENRY HOWARD, *Earl of Northampton, enter at this moment.* SIR FRANCIS DRAKE

*is a man of middle age, small in stature, but strong-limbed and broad-chested, with a reddish beard, and brown hair.* THE EARL OF NORTHAMPTON *is forty-eight years of age; his face indicates the manner of man he is, a flattering courtier. They are followed by* LORD HUNSDON, ROBERT CECIL, *Earl of Salisbury*; SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM, SIR JOHN HAWKINS, SIR MARTIN FROBISHER, *the* USHER OF THE BLACK ROD, *and several* GENTLEMEN PENSIONERS. *The* VILLAGERS, *recognizing* SIR FRANCIS DRAKE, *shout*] "Sir Francis Drake! Hail, Sir Francis Drake!" [SIR FRANCIS DRAKE *acknowledges their welcome with a bow and turns at once to the* STEWARD.]

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE. Why such angry tones on so merry an occasion?

THE STEWARD [*apologetically, for he is speaking to a superior*]. The knave hath interrupted our plans to set a play for our gracious Queen.

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE [*to* SHAKESPEARE]. How now?

SHAKESPEARE [*mildly*]. I did but suggest that 'twere better to set the scene here with entrances beyond, than to have the actors approach Her Majesty from behind the throne. 'Twas in the hope to add more pleasure to the excellent display.

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE. Sound reason, Master,—and how are you more pointedly called?

SHAKESPEARE. William Shakespeare, sir.

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE [*with a smile*]. Small wonder that your words transfix us, since they come of a quivering weapon.

THE STEWARD [*grudgingly, to* SHAKESPEARE]. An you be then that Master Shakespeare who did write our play, your words may have some value.

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE. As for these arrangements, the actors themselves shall say. [*Addressing the* PLAYERS.] Will you approach Her Majesty from behind the throne or will you burst upon her vision like the sun from out a cloud?

THE PLAYERS. Burst! Let us burst!

THE JESTER [*slyly*]. Aye, marry, and the Armada come, we may all be busted.

SHAKESPEARE. Nay, fool, not all, only the great 'tis given to be statued. [*Turning to* DRAKE.] But of this Armada—what tidings are abroad? 'Tis four years now since we first did hear of her.

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE. Oh, she is grown since then, for by our Lady, the four small boats are to an hundred swelled. Nor are they small, but all are galleons of the best that Spain and Italy do make. [*The crowd gathers eagerly about him.*] Why they do stand so far above the sea that they look like moated castles. They are so brightly colored that they seem o'er-grown with brilliant blossoms, but in between are dotted slits, like castle windows, from which cold Death looks black from out the mouths of guns. Nine thousand seamen man them and they bring nigh twenty thousand soldiers, all tried, and fully armed to fight when they do win our ports.

LORD HOWARD. But all their fine men are not such as England's seamen. [*The* SAILORS *cheer at this.*]

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE. Ah, what care we for Spanish strength? But this year our little fleet did singe the King's fine beard. [*Cheers.*] England yet will win for herself a place upon the seas and in the New World. [*A cannon shot is heard.*]

THE FIRST MERCHANT. The Queen! Her barge approaches!

THE STEWARD [*resuming his pompous authority*]. All to your places! Haste! [*The* VILLAGERS *make excited final preparations; the* WOMEN *anxiously rearrange their costumes and head dresses; the* ACTORS *retire to await their cues. Under* LORD HUNSDON'S *direction, the* GENTLEMEN PENSIONERS *and the* NOBLEMEN *form an aisle from the landing place to the throne. The royal barge, displaying a banner which bears the red cross of St. George on a white*

*ground, and propelled by two* WATERMEN *in the* QUEEN'S *livery, appears from the left and glides to the landing. Two* LADIES-IN-WAITING, *a* PAGE, LORD LEICESTER, *and* SIR WALTER RALEIGH *accompany* QUEEN ELIZABETH. QUEEN ELIZABETH *is fifty-four years old at this time. She is of medium height, elegantly dressed; her face oblong, fair and somewhat wrinkled. Paint and powder, as well as the ravages of time, are visible upon her face. Her eyes are small, yet black and pleasant, her nose a little hooked, her lips narrow. She wears an elaborate wig dyed a light auburn to resemble her own hair in her youth.* LORD LEICESTER, *Earl of Dudley,* QUEEN ELIZABETH'S *favorite, is a remarkably handsome man, tall of stature, and dignified in bearing.* SIR WALTER RALEIGH *is tall and well built, with thick dark hair and beard, a high forehead, a long face with an expression full of life. When the barge stops at the landing,* LORD LEICESTER *and* SIR WALTER RALEIGH *very ceremoniously assist the* QUEEN *to the quay. The* USHER OF THE BLACK ROD *advances to meet her,* PAGES *carry a canopy above her, and the two* LADIES-IN-WAITING *carry her train. The crowd cheers in wild enthusiasm. After a few moments' vain endeavor, the* STEWARD *silences them, and the song is sung with lusty rather than harmonious voices.*]

God save Britannia's queen;
God save her majesty.
Bless e'en the earth beneath her feet;
Bless this her isle, her royal seat;
Let all who hear her name repeat,
God save her majesty.

God save Britannia's queen;
God save her majesty.
This thronèd isle, this home of kings,
This land where laughter ever rings,
Where every Echo loudly sings,
God save her majesty.

God save Britannia's queen;
God save her majesty.
Let every loyal British son,
Support the right 'til life is done.
"Dieu et mon droit"—the victory on;
God save her majesty.

[*At the close of the song,* QUEEN ELIZABETH, *having reached the throne, seats herself and smiles graciously.*]

QUEEN ELIZABETH. I thank you, my good people. [*Twenty of the* VILLAGERS, *with their* WIVES *and several of the* SAILORS, *advance and perform a country dance. The* COURTIERS *applaud and the* QUEEN *smiles her approval. The* CHIEF STEWARD *approaches the throne, kneels, and rises as the* QUEEN *extends her hand to him.*]

THE STEWARD. Again we pray thy patience, gracious Lady, an thou wilt be pleased to attend upon our tragedy which the tradesmen of our village will present. [*The* QUEEN *nods in assent, and he proceeds to read the prolog from his scroll.*]

THE STEWARD [*as* PROLOG].

Dear Queen:

That you should better understand our play,
We tell you that we come without much skill
As simple players gay, to show our poor array,
If we offend it is with our good will.
A player, Shakespeare, wrote this tragedy
And gave it us that we might please your Majesty.
But he had made the tale too gentle far,
And we would have it sad as such things truly are,
So we did fill the scenes with sorrow deep and black
Of tears and dreadful happenings we would not have
our audience lack.
It pleaseth us, this tragedy, as now 'tis done;
We hope to please you all, displease not one.
Our players are at hand and by their might,
They'll make all clear to you and set you right.

[*The* STEWARD *summons the players and arranges them in a row.*]

SHAKESPEARE [*speaking to himself*]. What can these bungling fools have changed? The Queen will think me but a scribbling knave. [*The* STEWARD, *now having his players ready, resumes his reading.*]

THE STEWARD [*as* PROLOG].

First, to you I now present this man
Pyramus, the love bold, who play the part
Of him who loves—and dies—as no man can.
[PYRAMUS *bows.*]
And this fair lady, Thisbe, I present to you
Who also dies of grief and heart so true.
[THISBE *bows.*]
Now in our tragedy we needs must have a wall
With chink through which fond lovers do beguile
Their weary time, and so we needs must call
On Tommy Slats to act for us as wall the while.
[WALL *bows.*]
This man with sunny eyes and smiling face,
Presenteth moonshine, for these lovers thought no scorn
To meet by night and tell their love with grace.
[MOONSHINE *bows.*]
And last I do present man as lion,
For by such beast was Thisbe scared, and dropped
Her mantle fine, and only 'scaped in nick of time.
[LION *bows.*]
Anon comes Pyramus, and finds the mantle sopped
In Thisbe's blood. He draws his blade and dies.
Sweet Thisbe comes to meet her lover bold,
And finds his bloody body dead and cold.
For all the rest, if you but give us ear,
We'll tell to you and hope to make all clear.

[*Exit left, the* STEWARD *as* PROLOG, PYRAMUS, THISBE, LION, *and* MOONSHINE. WALL *takes position. Enter* PYRAMUS.]

PYRAMUS.

As I am Pyramus, of Thisbe much beloved,
So I would meet with her; but Oh! alack!
This cruel wall will not be moved;
The sight of my dear Thisbe thus I lack.
You wall, you sweet and lovely wall,
That keeps her voice far from my sight,
(Although in truth it is no wall at all
As I am William Nack; Pyramus for to-night)
This wall shall hear how I do mourn.
[*Moans.*]
For now am I of Thisbe much forlorn.
[*Enter* THISBE, *left.*]
Oh! Wall, but show a chink that I may see
[*The* WALL *shows chink.*]
Footsteps which seem my love to be.

THISBE.

And now 'tis night
Dark night which shines so black;
As lovers seem
When they each other lack.
O wall so high,
Oh! pray inform me straight
My lover's here?
Oh, has he, too, been late?
[PYRAMUS *on one side of the wall and* THISBE *on the other, talk through the chink.*]

PYRAMUS [*looks through chink*].

Oh, now mine ears do see
My true love doth approach.
Now wall, wert thou away,
Her cherry hand I'd touch.

THISBE.

O Pyramus!
I see thy gentle face.
Oh, nothing can
My love for thee erase.

PYRAMUS.

As true as truest lover can
I waited here for thee,
My heart was bounding as I ran
To keep my tryst with thee.
Wilt then with me now fly
Where ninny's—

PROLOG.

Ninus, not ninny, man!

PYRAMUS.

Where Ninus' tomb doth lie?

THISBE.

O Pyramus,
I'll do as thou dost say!
By Ninny's tomb
I'll be without delay.
[*Exeunt* PYRAMUS *and* THISBE.]

THE WALL.

And now since they another place have found,
I'll go my way, and now the wall is down.
[*Exit* WALL, *left.*]

SHAKESPEARE. How like children these rude swains do play at make believe. [*Enter the* MOON.]

THE MOON.

As now shed my sunny beams,
That shine about so bright,
You all can see how it doth seem
I am the moon of this dark night.
[*Enter* THISBE.]

THISBE.

At Ninny's tomb I meet my love.
Where is my love?
[*The* LION *enters and roars,* THISBE *drops her mantle and runs off. The* LION *claws the mantle, and then goes off roaring. Enter* PYRAMUS.]

PYRAMUS.

At last, sweet Moon, by thy true golden light,
This beauteous eve I come with heart so gay

And trust to take of truest Thisbe's sight,
Shine on, O moon, that we may not delay.
But what is here!
Go, go! O fear!
What evil do I see!
Thy veil all tore,
What, red with gore!
Oh, darling, can it be?
O duck, art dead?
Come sword, my head
Must from this body fall.
[*He cuts off his head.*]
Now, I'm in two,
My soul's with you,
It's answered to your call,
And thus I fall, I fall, I fall.
[*He lies down. Enter* THISBE.]

THISBE.

My love's asleep?
Wilt thou not peep?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak to me!
Breathe, breathe, and see.
Care not for our love ties?
Dead, dead? Oh, dear!
Speak, speak and hear
That Thisbe too will die.
O Sisters three,
Come, come to me,
And make my life to fly,
Thy dagger, dear,
I do not fear;
With it I'll stab me dead.
[*She stabs herself.*]
Now do I die
Without a sigh.
Farewell, my soul is fled,
Farewell, and I am dead!

QUEEN ELIZABETH. This is indeed a cruel tragedy; now both are dead.

PYRAMUS [*getting up*]

No, no, be not alarmed, most gracious Queen.
We live to die another time, but not as yet.
Thus our play is ended, and we hope you've seen
Our tragedy with trusting eyes, and wet.
If any credit, friends, you give to us,
Remember me, for I did change the lines,
And twisted them to suit myself, and thus
From Shakespeare's play we got good rhymes.
If we've offended you, we beg your grace,
And now we go, dear Queen, let others take our place.

[*Exit* PYRAMUS *with* THISBE.]

QUEEN ELIZABETH. 'Tis done with good intent; as such it pleaseth us. Is the author of the piece among you? If so, we would speak with him. [*The* STEWARD *brings* SHAKESPEARE *forward; both kneel before the throne, and rise when she bids them.*]

THE STEWARD. Most gracious Majesty, this be Master Shakespeare, a player of London, the author of our tragedy.

QUEEN ELIZABETH [*to* STEWARD]. Tragedy, say you? [*To* SHAKESPEARE.] Methinks it a better comedy.

SHAKESPEARE. I' faith, my gracious Lady, 'tis not usual for lovers to die in a burst of laughter. As your Highness but now remarked, the tragedy I did intend did not appear. But as 'tis a mirthful tragedy, 'twould fit well in a comedy, which might perchance succeed on London's stage.

QUEEN ELIZABETH. Well said. 'Tis long since we had seen one die so merrily. [SHAKESPEARE *takes his leave with a bow, and crosses left with several other gentlemen. He gives attention to their conversation but takes no part in it. A trumpet note is heard off stage. The* USHER OF THE BLACK ROD *advances to the right entrance.*] What signal sounds? [*The* USHER OF THE BLACK ROD *returns to the throne.*]

THE USHER OF THE BLACK ROD. Señor Mendoza, Am-

bassador of his gracious Majesty, King Philip of Spain, wishes to take boat to his ship from this place.

QUEEN ELIZABETH. Bring him hither. [*The* USHER *escorts* MENDOZA *to the throne. He bows very stiffly.* QUEEN ELIZABETH *ironically.*] Are you come to welcome us to our own castle? Although we have but late dismissed you, you still are welcome as an honored guest to our household.

SENOR MENDOZA. Your Majesty doth mistake me. I am but on my way to report your Grace's decision. But 'tis idle to lament my bootless errand to these shores. Experience, enow, has taught King Philip's envoys what they may expect. First, we're received, but made to feel denied; our message is rejected so coyly that it is scarcely not accepted; we ask the true decision and are dismissed abruptly from the court. When with the No we leave for Spain, we are but overtaken by a later messenger, all in hot haste, who brings an answer Egypt's Sphinx might send. [QUEEN ELIZABETH *yawns and taps her lips with her closed fan. The Spaniard loses control of his temper.*] And all these years has good King Philip waited with too calm a patience. And then the brave Mary, hapless Queen of Scots, whom you but yesteryear— [*He chokes with emotion. One of his attendants tries to quiet him.* THE JESTER, *who has been sitting on the grass, rises and hobbles about, rubbing his cramped limbs.*]

THE JESTER. Poor Mary? Nay, poor Davison! [*During this dialog the* SAILORS *have been plotting with heads together. Occasionally they laugh and congratulate one another in pantomime. One is now pushed forward as a speaker.*]

THE SAILOR. And would ye know what we do think of Philip, but wait—we'll set his counterfeit before your view! [*Exeunt sailors with rough laughter.*]

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE. Our England hath no apprehension; she is safe! [*The* SPANIARD, *angered beyond control, retorts boldly and ironically.*]

SENOR MENDOZA. Safe? Have you forgotten, sirs, the

fate of Antwerp, Ghent, and Flanders? Think not that justice, lacking haste, lacks certainty. The doom that has been gathering for years stands now prepared; it waits but for my message. It sails in ships built mountain high, like Alp peaks piercing heaven's floor. But did not these affright you, the soldiers that they carry will dry your lips and blanch your cheeks to lily color. Numbers, great beyond belief, not as hordes, but under charge of wise and skillful men, veterans of an hundred wars! Such guns they carry as will leave nothing whole before them. To crush to dust thy puny navy, to avenge the breath sweet Mary draws no more, to make on England vast red and reeking vengeance—there is coming the Armada! [*Amid tense silence the* SPANIARD *turns and goes toward his boat. The* COURTIERS, *astonished at his threat, watch him in amazement.* DRAKE, HOWARD, *and others speak together indignantly.*]

QUEEN ELIZABETH [*to* SHAKESPEARE, *ironically*]. Do you see the actor in yon strutting knave?

SHAKESPEARE. The situation is in truth, very like the fabric of a play.

LORD HOWARD [*to* DRAKE *and the others*]. Methinks our ships are not enough, or of a size to oppose such enemies. But England's spirit doth not wait for weapons. [QUEEN ELIZABETH *interrupts and prevents further discussion.*]

QUEEN ELIZABETH. A battle's oft half won by boasts, but we are not yet conquered. Such trifles well can wait. Let us a-hawking go. My Lord of Leicester—

LORD LEICESTER. Dear Madam, if hawking be your pleasure; but were it not better—

QUEEN ELIZABETH [*vexed*]. My Lord of Leicester, think you we know not our own minds? You are ever ready to suggest other than we— [LORD LEICESTER *has turned his head to speak to* LORD HOWARD, *not realizing that the* QUEEN *is addressing him.* QUEEN ELIZABETH *rises slightly from her throne and strikes his ear with her fan. He turns quickly, hand on sword, not knowing who has struck him,*

*but the* GENTLEMEN *standing near step forward to prevent him from drawing his weapon.* QUEEN ELIZABETH *laughing merrily.*] My horse, Lord Leicester. My horse! [*A white charger is brought, the* QUEEN *mounts, and the* STEWARD *arranges the* TOWNSPEOPLE *in a procession to follow her. The* SAILORS *rush in boisterously. One of their number wears a donkey's head inscribed "Philip of Spain." Shouts of laughter greet their jest, and the crowd follows the* QUEEN *singing.*]

God save Britannia's queen,
God save her Majesty.
Let every loyal British son
Support the right till life is done,
God and the right, the victory won,
God save her Majesty.

THE INTERLUDE

THE ASTROLOGER.

Once more, ye gentles all, give heed; for know
Ye well that spite of the Armada's pride
The realm of Shakespeare and of good Queen Bess
Was not o'ercome. From vale and hill the voice
Of Freedom sounded: "Britons, strong and firm,
Your children yet unborn cry out to you—
Make good your answer!" England heard and at
The call she to the center shook as shakes
A youthful giant wakened by the sound
Of some approaching foe. Her sons arose
And met the foe in deadly combat—fought
And won; for nature's elements combined
To crush the enemy. The stars, which in
Their courses fought against the Spanish might
Rejoiced to see the land of England saved.

THE CHORUS OF STARS.

Yes, England's spirit won that day
And set the land forever free;

And that same spirit found its way
To waiting lands beyond the sea!

THE ASTROLOGER.

Full twenty years have slipped away and now
Behold a fair at Gravesend on the Thames,
A rustic May-fair, where the folk enjoy
The day in merrymaking. Ballad-mongers
Are singing ballads; pedlers, alchemists,
Each one according to the custom of
His kind, are jostling one another, while
Still others lend their ears to daring tales
Of explorations o'er the Spanish seas,
As told by sailors late returned from lands
Beyond the stormy main. Here see again
Our Shakespeare, master now, still busy at
His art. Right deftly he doth seize upon
Those tales so bold, and from them doth conceive
The plot of that immortal play "The Tempest."
The crowning work of his maturer years.

THE CHORUS OF STARS.

O gentle bard who dreamed that dream,
We hail thee, prince of poets rare;
Still o'er the years thy light doth gleam
To glad our hearts with visions fair.

## THE SECOND PART

*The scene is Gravesend, a little Kentish village on the Thames, twenty miles from London, where ships from foreign lands discharge their cargoes, and where, in Elizabethan times, visitors from abroad were formally welcomed by the London Corporation. Some twenty years have elapsed since the coming of the Armada, and the scene represents the full fruition of English national life.*

*It is mid-afternoon of a warm May day. The great trees*

*cast long shadows over the deserted green where rustic benches invite to rest and coolness. In another part of the village, a May fair is in progress and at intervals the shouts of the merrymakers break the stillness.*

*As the action begins, a chorus of men's voices is heard singing.*

CHORUS

It was a lover and his lass
With a hey, and a ho, and hey nonino
That o'er the green cornfield did pass,
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

*A group of townsmen bearing a Maypole enter. They are accompanied by* MUCH, *the clown, who carries a pole with an inflated bladder at one end with which he taps the heads of the unwary,* PETER BARKER *fantastically made up to represent a dragon, and* WILL SPENCER, *a tall slender youth who is playing a lute. They continue to sing until they halt at the center of the stage.*

THE FIRST TOWNSMAN. Marry, friends, a goodlier spot than this 'twere hard to find.

THE SECOND TOWNSMAN. An it please the Mayor, 'twere meet that here we end our merrymaking. Come, let us to work! [*They busy themselves at setting up the Maypole. It is a tall pole, painted in bright colors, and wound with many colored ribbons and flowers of every hue. The workers are hindered by* MUCH *and* PETER BARKER, *who annoy them with their clownish tricks.*]

THE FIRST TOWNSMAN. Hey, you witless fools, save your antics for a greater audience and lend a hand to set this pole aright. [*An* OLD MAN *who has sauntered in, now comments reminiscently.*]

THE OLD MAN. How much this minds me of that feast

day in November when the Invincible Armada had cast away her name, and the Queen's Majesty herself entered into London in triumph. Those were great days in London; ay, in all England.

WILL SPENCER [*excitedly*]. Ay, those were great days, but these, in truth are greater still with the merrymakings at court, the banquets and the balls. And thanks to good Queen Bess, on the Bankside are many theaters where plays are enacted, and all London is merry over the plays of Master Shakespeare. Oh! to be in London now!

THE OLD MAN [*reprovingly*]. And you would do well to glad your heart with these our merrymakings, nor trouble your mind with London. 'Tis ever so. Youth hath ever the roving foot. But look you, Master Shakespeare is himself to-day in Gravesend. Mayhap he pines for rustic revelry.

WILL SPENCER [*excitedly starting forward*]. What! Master Shakespeare here? An I can find him, I can perchance to London! [*As he rushes from the stage right the shouts of the merrymakers are heard.*]

THE FIRST TOWNSMAN. Holla! Holla! They come! They come! [MUCH, *the clown, runs forward and peers around the gateway, lifting one foot so high that he falls to the ground. He springs up just in time to avoid being run over. In a motley array with the* MAYOR *leading, the procession enters from the left. Some are marching in rank and file in attempted military precision, some are pushing and jostling, some are enthusiastically crying their wares, and all seem bent on making as much noise as possible. The* MAYOR *is mounted on his footcloth horse, and is attended by his minstrels,* PIRETTO CHEVERETTE, *who plays the bagpipes, and* FERREX *who plays the pipe and tabor. Following in a dignified manner are six* WOODSMEN *dressed in leather garments and carrying axes. Next come six* MILKMAIDS *with pails and stools, leading a fine sleek cow, with gilded horns, decorated with ribbons and flowers. They are closely followed by the same number of* FORESTERS

*in russet doublets and hose of Lincoln green, with horns at their sides.* Robin Hood *is next with his favorite attendants,* Little John, Will Stukely *and* Friar Tuck, *clad also in green, escorting dainty* Maid Marian *and her five* Ladies-in-waiting. *Surging in, on both sides, between these groups are a multitude of characters common at all such gatherings. Chief among them are* John Graham, *the Puritan, dressed in broadbrimmed hat and snowy kerchief,* Jack-in-the-Green, *a tall man with head and shoulders concealed in a large triangular box brightly trimmed with herbs, flowers and flags, and a* Juggler, *who performs balancing and sleight-of-hand tricks on his way. Three* Chimney Sweeps, *with their dusty coats brightened by holiday ribbons gathered about a man carrying a puppet show while not far off an* Alchemist, *wan and pale, carries with care his precious liquids and metals.* Peter Bloff, *the pedler, incessantly crying his wares, tries to drown the voice of the* Monger, *who is proclaiming the latest ballad. Three* Gypsies *carry their tent, stopping occasionally to beg from the* Pastry Cooks *whose delicacies on trays suspended from their shoulders are most temptingly displayed, or, when opportunity presents itself, to steal fruit from a* Vender *whose attention is distracted. A bedlam* Beggar, *an object of pity, with face begrimed, hair elved in knots, and head crowned with hawthorne leaves, begs an alms from each passerby. There is also a* Tapster, *stout and jolly, bearing many tankards, followed by three* Apprentices *who are hauling in a huge cask of ale. They hoist it upon a stand, and the* Tapster *proceeds to serve all who come near. In the background, an old witch, who is really* Widow Goodman *in effective disguise, is terrorizing the children with her uncanny appearance and evil eye. Last of all,* Gregory, *the hobby-horse, a short man with a cardboard horse attached at his waist, trots in, neighing ludicrously. Mingled among these characters are many* Townspeople, *and* Farmers *with their* Families, *all in festive attire. The men saunter about smoking long Winchester pipes, the women talk happily to-*

*gether, while the children run about throwing squibs and firecrackers at the feet of the unsuspecting revellers. When the* MAYOR *reaches the Maypole, he wheels his horse, and halts the procession.*]

THE MAYOR. Fellow townsmen, merrymakers all, let us to the conclusion of our festivities on this so blithe a green. [*The* VILLAGERS *cheer loudly. The* MAYOR *dismounts and an* ATTENDANT *leads his horse away. Many of the* PEOPLE *come forward and throw tributes of flowers at the base of the Maypole.* PETER BLOFF, *at left front, begins to sing, attracting the attention of a group of* GIRLS *who admire his laces. He concludes the song before answering their numerous questions.*]

PETER BLOFF.

Will you buy any tape,
Or lace for your cape,
My dainty duck, my dear-a?
Any silk, any thread,
Any toys for your head,
Of the newest, and fin'st, fin'st wear-a?
Come to the pedler;
Money's a meddler,
That doth utter all men's ware-a!

[*When not bargaining with customers, he sings snatches of this song throughout the entire scene.*]

OTHER VENDERS.

What do you lack? What is't you buy?
What do you lack? Come buy! Come buy!
Gloves! masks! a necklace for your lady fair!
Come, lad! Come buy!

[*The* HOBBY-HORSE *at right front stage, amuses a group by frisking about imitating the galloping, curveting, ambling, trotting, and other paces of the horse. The* MINSTRELS *now play the lively tune of an old folk song, "A Farmer He Lived in a North Countrie," and the* CROWD *sings the words*

*while the* FORESTERS *and the* MILKMAIDS *dance a simple but effective dance about the Maypole. During the dance, from the left, proudly escorted by the* VILLAGE YOUTH, SHAKESPEARE *enters. He is "a handsome, well-shaped man, delicate rather than robust," and dressed after the fashion of the time. His beard is auburn, silvered a little here and there, and hair of the same rich color falls profusely about his ears. The bald crown, which is seen as he lifts his hat, accentuates the rather massive forehead. The charm of his face lies in the genial smile, and in the ingenuous sincerity of expression, revealing a "nature free and open, a temper plastic and well-balanced." His eyes twinkle sympathetically as he looks about him, while his "smooth and ready wit" flows freely. With* SHAKESPEARE, *in close conversaation, is* BEN JONSON. *His heavily built frame, inclined toward stoutness, is in striking contrast to* SHAKESPEARE'S *more delicate mould. His broad shoulders and sinewy arms suggest a laborer rather than an actor. His large head is thatched with an unkempt mass of grizzled curls. The forehead is broad and high, and the features rugged almost to coarseness. The firm lines of the chin, partially concealed by the bristling beard, express definiteness of purpose, while the keen eyes look out upon the world half humorously, half satirically. The three advance to the side of the* MAYOR, *who stands near the center of the stage.*]

WILL SPENCER. Worthy Mayor, to our humble revels, two honored guests I bring, Master William Shakespeare and Master Ben Jonson, for whom I entreat your welcome.

THE MAYOR [*beaming*]. And freely is it given, Youth. Welcome, Master Shakespeare! Well we know you, the friend of common folk no less than a king's favorite. Welcome, Master Jonson! For thine own worth first, and then again as friend of Master Shakespeare. Thrice welcome, both. [*In obedience to a sign from the* MAYOR, *ale is brought. They stand talking, while the* YOUTH *wanders off to join in the festivities. At the conclusion of the May*

*dance, soft music is heard from the gypsy tent, which has been put up at the left, nearly halfway back. A dark-eyed* GYPSY GIRL, *clad in many colors, appears and performs a weird and graceful dance, characteristic of her race. Meanwhile, the* PUPPET MASTER, *whose booth stands at left front, calls attention to the performance he is about to present.*]

THE PUPPET MASTER. Tuppence apiece, sirs! See the lovely Hero! Merrymakers all, watch our civil company! See how passing well the young Leander his part doth play! The touching history of Hero and Leander! Come one, come all! Tuppence apiece, sirs,—

TOM OF BEDLAM [*starting up*]. "Away! The foul fiend follows me!" [*A small group gathers about the puppet show. Others watch in awestruck silence the work of the* ALCHEMIST. *At right front, he stands in a dark, vapor-filled booth, in which three colored lights glow, a green one to the left, a red one to the right, and a blue one in the center. Dimly outlined in the mist is seen a large retort and a stuffed alligator, and moving about in the murk, the* ALCHEMIST *himself, a tall, slender man, very handsome in his skull cap, silky white beard, and flowing black gown. Before him on a rough counter is a row of bottles filled with the "Elixir of Life," and a few bars of alchemists' gold, which are for sale. When he is not making a sale, he is methodically grinding, pouring and mixing drugs while he mutters mystic incantations.*]

TOM OF BEDLAM. [*before the booth*]. "Poor Tom's a'cold! Poor Tom!

SHAKESPEARE. Poor wretch! What wilt thou do when winter comes? [*The* HOBBY-HORSE *trots up to* JONSON, *jocosely.*] And look you, Master Jonson, here is a character for you! Pray, put him in your latest drama.

JONSON. Faith, and that I would but that my heart misgives me. No coney-catcher he! I would not then condemn him to live through time eternal. But come, good Mayor, it

seems the revels drumble. 'Twere fit you should some rustic dance contrive.

THE MAYOR [*to the* DRAGON *and the* HOBBY-HORSE, *who have been cutting capers*]. Get thee hence, monsters! Now shall we see bold Robin Hood and his men "foot it featly" in the artful Morris dance.

ROBIN HOOD. What, ho! My merry men! Hither, Little John, Will Stukely, and all you gallant lads! Take each his place. [*The* PIPERS *play and the dance begins. The* OLDER FOLK *stand by to watch, but the* CHILDREN *swarm about the* PASTRY COOKS *who have been crying their wares throughout the scene.*]

A PASTRY COOK. "Buy any ginger bread, gilt ginger bread?"

A FRUIT VENDER. "Buy any pears, pears, fine, very fine pears?"

A PASTRY COOK. "Muffins, crumpets, peelets, tea-cakes! Sally Lum or Coburg!" [*Sung in sing-song manner, or two notes. The Morris dance being finished, the crowd applauds enthusiastically.*]

THE MAYOR. Well done, lads and lasses! [*To* SHAKESPEARE *and* JONSON.] What think you, sirs, of this our Passy Measure? I doubt me if it sprightlier could be done! [JOHN GRAHAM, *the Puritan, lacking interest in the dance, has been observing the witch as she chases the* CHILDREN. *He accosts the* MAYOR.]

JOHN GRAHAM. 'Tis feared that yonder woman may harm our children with her evil eye. She seems in truth a witch. Were it not best to cast her into the river? An she be a witch, she will float.

THE MAYOR. Fool! Know you not that yon witch is none but Widow Goodman hired to be our witch this day? Cease your idle prating. [*Failing to impress the* MAYOR *with his criticisms,* GRAHAM *argues with a pedler of toys.*]

THE PEDLER. "Rattles, drums, fiddles of the finest! Buy a hobby-horse! Buy a mouse-trap! a mouse-trap!"

JOHN GRAHAM. Peace, thou profane publican. Thy hobby-horse is an idol, a very idol, a fierce and rank idol.

TOM OF BEDLAM. "This is the foul fiend Flibberty-gibbet!"

THE PEDLER. "Cry you, merry sir! Will you buy a fiddle, sir?"

TOM OF BEDLAM. "The foul fiend haunts poor Tom!"

A COUNTRYMAN [*running frantically about, shrieking loudly*]. "O Lord, my purse is gone! My purse! My purse! My purse!" [*A commotion here occurs at the left. A* TOWNSMAN *has become intoxicated.*]

THE TOWNSMAN [*raising his brimming tankard to the* TAPSTER, *who smiles broadly*]. Good drawer of ale, here's to you and—the King—God save him! [*Sings.*]

> And let me the canakin clink, clink!
> And let me the canakin clink!
> A soldier's a man
> A life's but a span;
> Why, then, let a soldier drink!

[*As he reaches the end of his song, the* CONSTABLE, *who has been making his way through the* CROWD *from the extreme right, seizes him by the collar.*]

THE CROWD. The stocks! The stocks! [*The* CONSTABLE *clamps the* DRUNKARD *into the stocks. His good spirits do not desert him, however. He continues to sing drowsily, and at last dozes off.*]

THE CONSTABLE [*mopping his face*]. Some ale, I pray thee, good drawer! [*He is served.*] "Here's my comfort!" [*As he raises the glass to his lips, some* SMALL BOYS *throw firecrackers at his feet and then dart away. He is so startled that he drops his tankard and runs off in pursuit of the boys.* TOM OF BEDLAM *now squats on the grass, wailing with high-pitched voice and staring eyes.*]

TOM OF BEDLAM.

> Pillicock sat on Pillicock Hill:—
> Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!

[*He starts up.*]

Take heed of the foul fiend—
Peace, thou fiend!

A BALLAD-MONGER.

'Tis a monstrous sweet ballad of Widow
Dido I bring you,
With a very sweet tune
Which sometime I'll sing you.
Oh, Widow Dido! Widow Dido!

[*A sailor,* JOHN HOLDSWORTH, *in oilskin cap and sea-stained clothes, now advances and sets up a staff bearing a deer skin roll fastened with a cord. He endeavors to attract the attention of the* CROWD.]

JOHN HOLDSWORTH. Hark ye! hark ye! good people, all, while John Holdsworth, your own townsman, a wondrous tale of the New World doth tell. [*The* VILLAGE YOUTH *rushes up to* SHAKESPEARE *and* JONSON, *who, with the* MAYOR, *have been watching the* ALCHEMIST *mix his potions.*]

WILL SPENCER. Master Shakespeare, see you yonder sailor? He is even now about to relate a marvelous tale of the New World. Come at once! I doubt not you will find it of rare interest. [SHAKESPEARE *and* JONSON *follow the* YOUTH, *the former smiling indulgently, the latter openly laughing with good-humored contempt.*]

JOHN HOLDSWORTH. On a bright June day, did our good ship come to anchor in the mouth of a broad river. By order of the captain, I, with divers others, to the number of eight, set forward to discover gold.

THE TAPSTER. Ay, fool's gold! Thou didst find it, too, I warrant!

JOHN HOLDSWORTH. Whist, friend! A civil tongue is a good servant, and an empty head a good place to keep it. The country thereabout though desert, is yet exceeding fertile, with much good timber even of divers kinds, and strange wild plants with blossoms most prodigious. The

mulberry trees with their load full low did bend and we did feast ourselves till we could eat no more. But being nighted there—[*He leans forward, lowering his voice slightly, at which the* CROWD *gathers closer and listens more intently.*]—we knew us in a land bewitched. Scarcely were we upon our blankets couched 'ere we felt as though in a fiery shroud.

JONSON. A fiery shroud! What mean you by such foolery? Tell us but your simple story and rack it not.

JOHN HOLDSWORTH. And, by'r lady, I rack it not. A *demon* did the land control, as I'm a living man! Great plants we saw that did with uncanny jaws insects and small animals imprison.

SHAKESPEARE [*with interest*]. And think you this was the work of evil spirits?

JOHN HOLDSWORTH. Ay, it was, else how explain it? And mark you, when we sought to gather wood to build our evening fire, angry hedgehogs in our path did lie and grievously did torment us.

SHAKESPEARE. And saw you naught of natives there?

JOHN HOLDSWORTH. Ay, that I did. In faith, I once had bite and sup with them, and to that happy chance I owe this greatest of my treasures. [*He pulls the cord and the deer skin falls to its full length, revealing the picture of a hideous monster.*] This is the great god Piasa, the mightiest god of the New World. While the Indians did lie asleep, I filched it from their tepee. And had any caught me, I had been done to death. [*The entire* CROWD *is now giving attention and* HOLDSWORTH *seizes the opportunity to take up a collection. He passes the hat, into which sundry small coins are tossed. He continues talking.*] The great god Piasa! The demon of the New World! And you prove it a cheat, I'll give ye a tuppence!

TOM OF BEDLAM. Ay, they'd give a tuppence to see a "dead Indian," but ne'er a bit to a poor beggar for his clack-dish.

JONSON [*to* SHAKESPEARE, *aside*]. Master Shakespeare,

there's a strange monster for you. Why not put him in one of your monstrous plays? You with your disregard for proprieties would find him a rare hero. Come, write us something new.

SHAKESPEARE. An excellent idea. In truth, one I should not look to you for, Ben. You spurn all else but the stuff of shops and streets; your imagery is clogged with books and rules.

JONSON. That is well, Master Will. Jeer at books and rules an you will. You write for the passing day; I, for all time. The difference is vast.

SHAKESPEARE [*musing*]. And what care I for that? The present joy is mine—to dream, to play, to do. [*A song is heard from the river and the* RIOTERS *stop to listen.*]

I shall no more to sea, to sea,
Here will I die ashore.

THE CROWD. 'Tis they! Home again from the Indies! Gates! Strachey! They come! They come! [*A boat, bearing three men besides the* OARSMEN, SIR THOMAS GATES, WILLIAM STRACHEY, *and* JOHN OXENHAM, *anchors at the quay. They step out and the* MAYOR *advances to meet them.*]

THE MAYOR. Welcome, fellow townsmen. Prospectors in an unknown world! In the name of the Corporation, I give you greeting! 'Tis a bright day that sees you again in Gravesend. You are ever welcome!

SIR THOMAS GATES. Ay, and bright it is, though yon cloud obscures the sun. 'Tis well, else the bright faces of our village maids might bewilder our sight. Merry friends, there's no scent to my mind like this old home scent in all the spice islands I ever sailed by!

THE SECOND TOWNSMAN. And were you in truth to the Indies? And *are* such things as they do speak of?

SIR THOMAS GATES. The list of our voyage was Virginia, but at the bidding of the tempest were we driven far from our course. We—

THE MAYOR [*interrupting*]. Whence, then, are you come?

SIR THOMAS GATES. From a new world, sir, an isle of devils, fraught with unbelievable adventures, and peopled with inhuman shapes. There magic plays mad pranks with romance and wishes know no limit. Verily, a place where age finds youth, and youth finds all enchantment. [SHAKESPEARE *and* JONSON, *who have been greeting* STRACHEY, *approach the group in time to hear this speech.*]

JONSON [*laughing*]. How, now! More monsters! More witchcraft! 'Twere well, Master Will, you miss no jot or tittle. The time is ripe for some new tale of sorcery.

SHAKESPEARE [*impatiently*]. An you could still your chatter, Ben, we might hear. [*To* GATES.] Prithee, sir, tell us more. What of this isle bewitched? Saw you indeed such wonders?

SIR THOMAS GATES. Ay, and many more. Most marvelous things I could tell. But home awaits me; no longer would I keep me from its heart. My valiant companions can speak as well as I. I pray you pardon me.

THE CROWD. Make way! Make way for Sir Thomas Gates! [GATES *walks off, looking reminiscently about him.* STRACHEY, OXENHAM, *and the others, who have been greeting friends in the crowd, now join the central group. A burly, grizzled* MAN *in sea-stained clothing, slaps* STRACHEY *on the back.*]

THE SAILOR. Heigh, my hearty, wilt have ale to cheer ye or a bit of the weed?

THE MAYOR. Pray you, be seated. Would it please you to discourse further of your adventures?

THE TAPSTER. Ay, "here is that which will give language to you." [*Ale is served.*]

JONSON [*lifting his glass*]. Here's to the enchanted land of which we would hear! And were I master there, I should have "my cellar in a rock by the seaside," with sprites to serve celestial liquor! [*They drink. Long Winchester pipes and tobacco are passed and the men smoke.*]

SHAKESPEARE. And now what of the storm, the tempest, which drove you from your course?

WILLIAM STRACHEY. "I had been in storms before, but all I had ever suffered gathered together might not hold comparison to this. We could not apprehend in our imaginations any possibilities of greater violence; yet was fury added to fury and one storme urging a second more outrageous than the former. It could not be said to raine, the waters like whole Rivers did flood the ayre. Our clamours drowned in the windes and the windes in thunder, the sea swelled above the clouds, and gave battell unto Heaven."

THE FIRST TOWNSMAN. And the ship? How did she withstand this terrible onslaught?

WILLIAM STRACHEY. Ay, there was not a moment in which the sodaine, splitting or oversetting of the Shippe was not expected. When the gale arose, "we received a mighty leake. This leakage appeared as a wound given to men that were before dead. We almost drowned within, whilst we sat looking when to perish from above."

THE MAYOR. How came you then ashore?

WILLIAM STRACHEY [*reverently*]. By Providence divine.

JOHN OXENHAM [*interrupting*]. Ay, Providence it may have been, but a spirit did guide us safe.

THE CROWD [*amazed*]. A spirit!

JOHN OXENHAM. Even so. "Upon the Thursday night" when the powers of Heaven seemed bent on our destruction, "Sir George Somers, being upon the watch, saw an apparition of a little round light like a faint Starre."

SHAKESPEARE. And this spirit did guide you?

JOHN OXENHAM. Ay, "it trembled with a sparkeling blaze, and shooting sometimes from Shroud to Shroud," did light us on our way.

SHAKESPEARE. Was it a spirit of the air?

JOHN OXENHAM. Of the air, or the sea, or the devil, we know not, but, by'r lakin, it served us miraculously.

THE OLD MAN. But of your island, man, of fabulous

wealth, what of it? Have done with this meaningless chatter and tell us of what does, in faith, more interest us.

JOHN OXENHAM [*angrily*]. Mayhap, he should "carry this island home in his pocket and give it his sone for an apple."

WILLIAM STRACHEY. Ay, or "sowing the kernels of it in the sea, bring forth more islands." But to the island, an you will. "Almost inaccessible" it is but of a "delicate temperance." The grass grew lush and lusty, and there was "everything advantageous to life"; and isle prodigious, "full of noises and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments will hum about the ears."

JOHN OXENHAM. But yet some drawbacks we found. At times we felt peculiar cramps, as some elf did pinch us, but we could see nothing. It seemed some master spirit did rule the island. And had we the magic to subdue it, we had been kings indeed.

THE TAPSTER. Ay, a servant spirit, that's to my liking.

SHAKESPEARE. Did naught but spirits this isle inhabit?

WILLIAM STRACHEY. "I saw such islanders, who, though they are of monstrous shape, yet, their manners are more gentle-kind, than of our human generation you shall find many."

JOHN OXENHAM [*excitedly*]. Ay, but we did hear of men "whose heads stood in their breasts"; of men like fish, and fish like men, with finny arms, and hairy, scaly skins, whose limbs did not support them upright, but they did creep along the ground. Great claws they had for fingers with which they dug for food. They had voices like to human but with strange roarings in them, not earthly. A very hagseed, a race which none would own. Had I one such in England, 'twould make my fortune on a holiday.

THE TAPSTER. Ay, a servant monster, that's to my liking!

JONSON. An you don't weave a tale, Master Shakespeare, anon, I will myself attempt it, albeit "I am loth to

make nature afraid in my plays, like those that beget tales, tempests, and such like drolleries."

THE TAPSTER. Didst say you *saw* such monsters?

WILLIAM STRACHEY. Nay, we saw them not, but as I saw things strange and beyond belief, so could I almost credit what was told me. What think you of a fiendish dog, a wer-wolf, which in one day a thousand wild hogs did kill? And, indeed, the people of the island, gentle though they be, were almost monsters in their likeness, as they did daub coloring on their bodies, and in glittering plumage did deck themselves, and ornaments of gold.

THE MAYOR [*excitedly*]. Gold! Say you gold! [*A clap of thunder interrupts. The* PEOPLE *gather more closely about the* SAILORS, *paying little attention to the coming storm.*]

JOHN OXENHAM. Ay, gold! There's more gold in the Bermoothes than would pave the streets of London. Why it grows there as plentifully as cherries in Kent. As I live, I saw it! A cave filled with gold, as I'm a Christian man. An you don't believe me, go and see. But we did bring with us some Indian natives of the isle [*he looks toward the dock*] who even now are coming. [*There is a general craning of necks toward the approaching boat.*]

WILLIAM STRACHEY. They are natives of the Indies, but of the West, not the East. The country there is rife with such. We brought with us two of these Indians, who, as you will see, do in stature greatly resemble white men. Further inland, no doubt, they become more distorted until their human semblance is quite destroyed. [*The boat pulls in to the dock. The* INDIANS, *escorted by the* SAILORS, *approach amid exclamations of wonder from the* CROWD.]

SHAKESPEARE [*to* JONSON]. What strange beings these are! Mark their coppery skin and hair that doth lie coarse and straight. And, methinks, the Indians see as strange a sight as do the English. Why is't, in faith, they show no wonder? One might think a Mayday festival were to them a boresome pastime.

JONSON. And so, perchance, it is. We wis not of what

wild orgies these monster men are capable. [*To the* INTERPRETER.] I have heard much of their strange dances. Let them show us their skill. [*The* INDIANS *respond to their* INTERPRETER'S *request with grunts of approval, and dance for the crowd a native dance. The* INDIANS *now notice the picture of the sailor's monster, which still stands at back of stage. They walk toward the picture, uttering strange, guttural sounds.*]

WILLIAM STRACHEY [*to the* INTERPRETER]. What, pray, do they see in that prodigy to cause such strange behaviour?

THE INTERPRETER [*after talking with* INDIANS]. Whence came that picture? The Indians recognize it as a picture of the Piasa. They say the original is painted upon a high cliff on the banks of a great river which flows through the forest. I, myself, have seen it in Indian camps. By some tribes it is— [*His words are drowned by another crash of thunder. The wind begins to blow furiously. The* REVELERS, *collecting their property, hurry off. The sailor,* HOLDSWORTH, *has some trouble in rolling up his picture, and is among the last to leave.* SHAKESPEARE *stands watching him, as the* MAYOR, STRACHEY *and* JONSON *move toward the right.*]

SHAKESPEARE [*to himself*]. And so it is in truth a monster of the New World and no creation of a drunken sailor's mind. [*He follows the* SAILOR *to the left exit.*]

THE MAYOR. The storm is upon us! Come, gentlemen, to the inn! [*The men hurry off to the right, the* INDIANS *with them. All, even to* JONSON, *are too intent upon reaching shelter to notice* SHAKESPEARE, *who remains under the tree, on the deserted green. He is pondering over what he has heard of the strange new land with its magic spells, its gentle spirits, and its uncouth monsters. The sky has grown very dark. Amid flashes of lightning and rumble of thunder, a dance of earth spirits takes place. The dance concluded, they vanish in a terrific clap of thunder which rouses* SHAKESPEARE *from his reverie.*]

SHAKESPEARE [*rapturously*]. The Tempest! What a

storm for a shipwreck! An enchanted isle! Spirits! [ARIEL *is seen for an instant and then vanishes.*] Witchcraft! [SYCORAX *appears and hobbles across the stage at the rear.*] Monsters! [CALIBAN *crawls across the stage after* SYCORAX.] Youth and romance! [FERDINAND *and* MIRANDA *trip blithely past.*] And I, Prospero, the master of it all. [*There is a lull in the storm. Night is coming on, but* SHAKESPEARE *is still wrapped in his thoughts.*]

> To weave, perforce from out these stands!
> Come, spirits of my fancy! fetch my robe,
> The wich doth give me power, to this place.
> Bestow it on my shoulders; that I may
> Conceive for future time and divers folk
> A triumph of mine art—The Tempest!

[*He sinks down upon a bench and falls into a reverie. The stage slowly darkens until nothing can be seen. The storm breaks anew with redoubled fury. The wind blows a gale, the lightning flashes, and the thunder roars. Above the tumult, the voices of the* MEN *on the ship are heard, as they struggle for their lives. The lines are taken from the opening scene of "The Tempest."*]

BOATSWAIN. Heigh, my hearts; cheerly, cheerly, my hearts; yare, yare; take in the topsail; Tend to the master's whistle;—Blow till thou burst, thou wind, if room enough!

ALONZO. Where's the master? . . .

BOATSWAIN. Keep below! . . .

ANTONIO. Where's the master? . . .

BOATSWAIN. Hence! To cabin! Silence! Out of our way! Down with the top-mast! Yare! lower, lower; bring her to try with main course. [*Cries from within.*] Plague on this howling! Silence! Lay her ahold, ahold; set her two courses; off to sea, lay her off.

MARINERS. All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!

CONFUSED VOICES. Mercy on us! We split, we split! Farewell, my wife and children! Farewell, brother! We

split, we split! God's will be done! [*Soft music is heard. The fury of the storm abates. The stage slowly lightens, revealing Scene II, The Island, before the cell of* PROSPERO. *Enter* SHAKESPEARE, *as* PROSPERO, *and* MIRANDA. *Then follow in abridged form the scenes from "The Tempest" in which* PROSPERO, MIRANDA, FERDINAND, CALIBAN, ARIEL, STEPHANO *and* TRINCULO *play the leading parts, the lines of all the other characters being omitted. The presentation of "The Tempest" closes with the following adaptation of* SHAKESPEARE'S *lines after the masque of Iris, Ceres, and Juno, which* PROSPERO *has devised to celebrate the "contract of true love" of* FERDINAND *and* MIRANDA.]

FERDINAND.

This is a most majestic vision.
May I be bold to think these spirits?

PROSPERO.

Spirits, which by mine art I
Have from their confines called to enact
My present fancies.

FERDINAND.

Let me live here ever;
So rare a wonder'd father and a wise
Makes this place Paradise.

PROSPERO.

You do look, my son, in a mov'd sort,
As if you were dismayed: be cheerful, sir.
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep:

[*Taking both their hands in his.*]
I'll deliver all:
And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales
And sail so expeditious that shall catch
Your royal fleet far off.

MIRANDA [*in ecstasy*].
Oh, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
That has such people in't!

[*With* MIRANDA'S *closing words, the stage is darkened. Light returns gradually and* SHAKESPEARE *is again revealed, seated on the rustic seat on the village green. He arouses himself and walks to the center of the stage. Then to soft music he speaks the lines of the play, in which he gives over his art.*]

SHAKESPEARE.
Ye elves of rills, and brooks, standing lakes, and groves,
. . . by whose aid . . . I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
. . . and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt:
The strong-based promontory
Have I made shake; and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command,
Have waked their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure . . . I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.
[*He leaves the stage.*]

## THE EPILOG

[*The* ASTROLOGER *enters, attended by the* CHORUS OF STARS, *bearing a brazier with glowing coals, symbolic of the fires of poesy. Then all the characters of the masque enter.*]

THE CHORUS OF STARS.

In remembrance, in remembrance,
Let a hymn of gladness rise;
In remembrance, in remembrance,
Come, we'll carol through the skies.
Carol, till the heaving ocean,
Till the hills with joy abound;
Carol, till the forests echo,
Till the teeming earth resounds.

In remembrance, in remembrance,
Let the ills of life relent;
In remembrance, in remembrance,
Let the chafing heart repent.
Patience—for the dawning morrow
With her cloak conceals the moon—
Patience—for the Muses borrow
Other spirits. Grant them room!

THE ASTROLOGER.

His was a spirit that no time can chill,
No tomb extinguish, and no envy kill.
[*A pause.*]
I saw of late within these flames his face;
I saw and bowed as if before a seer.
I saw, and feared, and shook before his gaze
And shuddered at his gleaming, piercing eyes.
O eyes! alight, alive, aflame!
[*A pause.*]
Yes, and methinks, if longing bears its fruit—
Some spirit's pulse shall answer Nature's lute—
Some tongue shall speak, some master hand yet write;
God may withhold but not destroy the light.
[*To the* CHORUS OF STARS.]
Arise, arise, ye tenders of the fire!
Ye sacred spirits, living, burning brands—
And speed with peace across the surging deep,

Across the craggy mount, the glowing sand.
Speed, for the warriors cry, the wounded groan,
And drunken Mars quaffs heroes' blood and reels.
Speed, for the winds arise, the thunders swell,
The flickering flame that gleamed doth pale and wane.
Speed! for the lightnings play—the salt sea moans;
The moon grows ruddy and the earth grows cold.
Speed!
[*They leave the stage, singing as they go.*]
In remembrance, in remembrance,
Let a hymn of gladness rise;
In remembrance, in remembrance,
Come, we'll carol through the skies.
Carol, till the heaving ocean,
Till the hills with joy abound;
Carol, till the forests echo,
Till the teeming earth resounds.

# THE INN OF DISCONTENT *

By

PERCIVAL WILDE

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## CHARACTERS

An Old Man
A Lover
A Scientist
A Poet
A Serious Individual
A Girl
A Young Thing
An Old Woman

# THE INN OF DISCONTENT

## The First Scene

*Outside—Night. A great portal. Over it, a hanging lantern. On either side of it, lofty windows. A path winds from right to left. The scene is but dimly lighted.*

The Poet. I wonder if the door will ever open.

The Scientist. The door is opening.

The Poet. About time, I should say. [*Slowly the door swings inward just far enough to permit an old man to stand upon the threshold. His appearance is curious. His clothes are rather less than informal. His trousers are old and baggy at the knees; he wears neither coat, collar, tie, nor hat; and his unbuttoned vest flaps over an untidy shirt. His glistening bald scalp, fringed by a few lonely hairs on either side, surmounts an easy-going, humor-loving, contented countenance. The total impression he conveys is that of a sixty-year-old bricklayer at a moment of relaxation.*]

The Poet [*sotto voce to the* Scientist]. They don't put on much style here, do they? Nothing pretentious—nothing impressive—nothing palatial. Judging by the gatekeeper it isn't much of an Inn.

The Old Man [*overhearing; placidly*]. It ain't.

The Poet. Oh, I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to offend you.

The Old Man. I ain't offended. Who said I was? I don't take offense easy. No, sir! Not me! When you've seen as much as I have, an' when you've lived as long as me, you learn to take 'em as they come without getting het

up about it. Easy's the word—easy. [*He seats himself comfortably on the threshold. It is to be noted that at no time does he actually cross it.*] No; it ain't much of an Inn—I'll say so—but it's the only one there is. Leastways, it's the only one I know about. So you can take it, or you can leave it.

THE POET. Why didn't you come when we knocked?

THE OLD MAN. Did you knock?

THE SCIENTIST. We knocked twice.

THE OLD MAN. In the first place, I ain't the gatekeeper. There ain't no gatekeeper here. But leaving that aside, why did you knock at all? What's the big idea? Why didn't you walk right in?

THE POET. What?

THE OLD MAN. The door's never locked. It's always open. You can come in, or you can get out, just as suits you best. Only once you go, you can't come back. See? [*He extracts a stubby clay pipe from a pocket, and lights it contentedly.*] Got to make up your mind—that's all there's to it. Got to decide what you want to do—and then stick to it. [*He pauses.*] Some stays; some don't. Some thinks it's great; some thinks it's rotten. Some likes it; some hates it. Now, I likes it. I thinks—

THE POET [*interrupting*]. Can you put us up overnight?

THE OLD MAN. We're full.

THE POET. You can't turn us away on a night like this.

THE OLD MAN. What's the matter with the night? Like any other night, ain't it?

THE POET. You can't turn us away; that's all.

THE OLD MAN. I ain't said nothing about turning you away. Not a word! [*He appeals to the* SCIENTIST.] Ain't that so, mister?

THE SCIENTIST. You can put us up somewhere.

THE OLD MAN. "Put us up?" "Put us up?" How do you get that way? You can go in if you like. You can find a room if you like.

THE SCIENTIST. But you said you were full.

THE OLD MAN. Sure. We're always full. There's never been a day since I've been here that we ain't been full. But what's that got to do with it? We won't be no fuller to-morrow than we are to-day—and we won't be no fuller next week than we'll be to-morrow. Go on in. Find a room. Find a good room while you're at it. If there's somebody in it, put him out.

THE POET [*surprised*]. What? What did you say?

THE OLD MAN. Put him out, I said. Put him out. O-u-t; out.

THE SCIENTIST. Put him out where?

THE OLD MAN [*genially*]. Well, that's what you might call a matter of taste. Throw him downstairs. Pitch him out of the window if that strikes your fancy. Do what you like, only get rid of him somehow.

THE POET [*hesitantly*]. I have no inclination for that sort of thing. I'm quite sure I'd prefer not to do that.

THE OLD MAN. You don't have to.

THE POET. If I find a room I like, I might ask the man in it to double up with me.

THE OLD MAN. You might.

THE POET. He might be willing to do that.

THE OLD MAN. He might.

THE POET. Then again—

THE SCIENTIST. He might *not* be willing. He might throw *you* downstairs. He might pitch *you* out of the window.

THE OLD MAN [*nodding*]. You're beginning to get the idea.

THE POET. Look here—what about the law?

THE OLD MAN. Well, what about it?

THE POET. There should be something of the kind—

THE OLD MAN [*interrupting*]. Laws! Laws! Do you want some laws? All right, go ahead and make some. Go right ahead. Make some every morning when you get up.

Make some after breakfast. Make some more after lunch. Make some more every night.

THE POET. But haven't you got any already?

THE OLD MAN. They give me a headache. That's what I think of 'em.

THE POET [*shaking his head*]. I don't want to put anybody out. Rather than do that, I'd sleep on the floor.

THE OLD MAN. You can. You can. Some try that a while.

THE SCIENTIST. What happens?

THE OLD MAN. They get tired of it. But there's nothing to prevent you from trying it if you like. In fact, you can try anything you like.

THE SCIENTIST [*after a pause*]. I think we should do as the others do.

THE OLD MAN. If you're asking me, that seems to be the general sentiment.

THE SCIENTIST [*resolutely*]. Come on; I'm going in.

THE POET [*hesitantly*]. I'd rather not.

THE OLD MAN. Suit yourself. You don't have to come in. Nevertheless—

THE POET [*as he pauses*]. Nevertheless?

THE OLD MAN [*kindly*]. I've noticed—they get used to it pretty fast.

THE SCIENTIST. Come. I'm going in.

THE POET. So am I. [*They enter the Inn. The* OLD MAN *smiles; puffs his pipe. Presently a* YOUNG THING *enters from one side. She is buoyant, pretty, and, according to her own conceptions of how such details should be managed, is dressed to kill.*]

THE YOUNG THING. Hello, old bean!

THE OLD MAN. Hello, yourself!

THE YOUNG THING. Pretty quiet, eh?

THE OLD MAN. Always quiet, to my way of thinking.

THE YOUNG THING. Is that so? Well, wait till I get inside, and I'll show 'em something. I'll put some pep in the old joint. I'll make 'em sit up all right, all right!

THE OLD MAN. There's always use for somebody like you.

THE YOUNG THING. Ain't it the truth? A little bunch of perpetual motion—that's me! A hundred and ten pounds of chain lightning—all in one package! I'm out for a good time—a r'aring, tearing good time—and I don't care who knows it. The more, the better. [*She stops; peers at the doorway with odd, birdlike motions of her head.*] You know, if I was running things, I'd change all this.

THE OLD MAN. How so?

THE YOUNG THING. I'd make it more friendly. It isn't friendly enough—not for me, at any rate. I'd put a couple of nice, comfortable seats here—one on either side of the door; and I'd plant rambler roses all around; and I'd hang gay curtains in the windows. And then I'd lay a mat down—there's something friendly about a mat—and I'd put up a sign "Welcome Stranger." I'd make it a bit homey, see? [*Hesitantly; wistfully.*] Do you think they'd allow it?

THE OLD MAN. I'm afraid it can't be done.

THE YOUNG THING. No, I guess not. You can never do anything you really want to, can you? [*She pauses.*] Say, is it like this on the inside?

THE OLD MAN. What do you mean?

THE YOUNG THING. Dark—cold—unfriendly—?

THE OLD MAN. I'm not unfriendly.

THE YOUNG THING. No, but the rest—the rest of everything?

THE OLD MAN. Inside—inside—it's what you make it.

THE YOUNG THING [*eagerly*]. Do you mean that?

THE OLD MAN. What you make it? Yes, I mean that; every word.

THE YOUNG THING [*with relief*]. Then it won't be so bad after all. [*She inspects the doorway again.*] Come to think of it, it doesn't look so unfriendly when you get used to it. I think—I think I could get to like it—

THE OLD MAN. Bully for you.

THE YOUNG THING [*finishing her sentence*]. —if the inside's nicer. [*She pauses; pirouettes gaily on the threshold.*] What a lark it's going to be! What a lark! Things will be different now that I'm here! [*She pirouettes into the Inn.*]

THE OLD MAN [*calling after her*]. Good luck to you! [*A pause. It is slowly growing lighter. Presently a* LOVER *and a* GIRL *come along the path.*]

THE LOVER. Just a few steps more, sweetheart.

THE GIRL. You've been saying that all night.

THE LOVER. But it's only a short distance now.

THE GIRL. I'm tired; I'm so tired.

THE LOVER. Don't you see? We're there, dearest.

THE GIRL. It's been such a long way; such a terribly long way.

THE LOVER. We've come to the end of it.

THE GIRL. The beginning of it; only the beginning of it. I feel as if I couldn't take another step.

THE LOVER. Dearest, we're nearly at the threshold. It's only a little further.

THE GIRL. I must rest first. [*She sits.*] I'm so tired; so tired.

THE LOVER. Rest; rest as long as you like, and then, when you're ready, we'll go in. Haven't we been looking forward to that, it seems for ages and ages?

THE GIRL. Don't ask me. I'm tired. I can't think. I want to rest; that's all.

THE OLD MAN. Good evening, sir—and ma'am.

THE LOVER. Good evening.

THE OLD MAN. A fine night. A remarkably fine night, if I say so myself.

THE LOVER. A fine night, indeed.

THE OLD MAN [*offering his pouch*]. A bit of 'baccy?

THE LOVER. Thank you, no. [*He surveys the portal.*] So this is the Inn?

THE OLD MAN. Such as it is; yes, sir.

THE LOVER. It's not what you might call prepossessing, at least, not from the outside. I can't say I care for it.

THE OLD MAN [*nodding*]. There's many of 'em that don't.

THE LOVER [*peering across the threshold*]. Uninviting; gloomy; a dark, depressing place: that's how it strikes me.

THE OLD MAN. Some find it so.

THE LOVER. But it's the only one there is, therefore it's the best there is. That's logical. It's the best of all possible Inns.

THE OLD MAN. That's one of my own ways of looking at it, sir.

THE LOVER. After all, it's not the place that matters. It's what you bring to it. It's not what's around you: it's what you've got inside of yourself.

THE OLD MAN. Ah, there you've said a true word!

THE LOVER. I come expecting—well, I hardly know what I expect. I only know that it will all be new and strange. But there are two faces to everything, and I shall look for the pleasanter face. Happiness? Unhappiness? What are they? Castles you build out of nothing. Where are they? Within yourself! Your world is what you think it is—you, and you alone. Mine shall be a glorious world, filled with lovely things, overflowing with beautiful moments, a long succession of happy hours!

THE OLD MAN. A great idea, sir, if you can hold on to it.

THE LOVER. Of course I shall hold on to it. What makes you think anything else might happen? I shall hold on to it: nothing simpler.

THE OLD MAN. It ain't always the simplest things that are the easiest.

THE LOVER. Humph! [*He returns to the* GIRL.] Are you rested, sweetheart?

THE GIRL. Yes, dear.

THE LOVER. Are you ready to go in?

THE GIRL. In a little while. [*She rises; goes to him.*] Dear, you love me?

THE LOVER. I love you.

THE GIRL. Much?

THE LOVER. Very much. More than anything else.

THE GIRL. Are you sure? Are you quite sure?

THE LOVER. It is the one thing of which I am sure.

THE GIRL. It is the one thing of which we must be sure. On that we are resting all our faith. If we should be mistaken—if we should be deceiving ourselves, it would be too terrible.

THE LOVER [*resolutely*]. We are not deceiving ourselves.

THE GIRL. We met—as in a dream. Two souls—two human souls—wandering in a mist. We met. We loved. We love.

THE LOVER. We will always love.

THE GIRL. Ah, if I only knew!

THE LOVER [*taking her in his arms*]. Everything else may be unreal. For all we know, everything else is unreal. But our love, that is not unreal! Wherever you go —wherever I go—our love will draw us together.

THE GIRL. Do you believe that? Do you really believe that?

THE LOVER. With all my heart. From the ends of the earth my love will call to you—

THE GIRL. And from the ends of the earth my love will answer. [*They kiss.*]

THE OLD MAN. Ahem! Ahem!

THE LOVER. What is it?

THE OLD MAN. There might be others coming any moment.

THE LOVER. We don't care. Do we? Let them see. What is there to be ashamed of? [*He leads the* GIRL *towards the* OLD MAN.] This lady has promised to become my wife.

THE GIRL. We met—it seems ages ago.

THE OLD MAN [*without addressing anybody in particular*]. It 'most always does.

THE GIRL. We loved at sight. We will always love.

THE OLD MAN. I seem to have heard those words before.

THE GIRL. Whatever happens, whatever may come, our love will draw us together.

THE OLD MAN. Even in there?

THE GIRL. Even in there.

THE OLD MAN. Fine if it works. Fine and dandy!

THE LOVER [*bristling*]. Are you suggesting it won't work?

THE OLD MAN. I ain't suggesting anything. I'm just saying—

THE LOVER [*interrupting*]. You're saying too much. [*He turns to the* GIRL.] Come, dearest. [*They enter the Inn together.*]

THE OLD MAN. So that's that! [*He proceeds philosophically to knock the ashes out of his pipe. Down the path comes a* SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. *It is now sunrise.*]

THE OLD MAN. Good evening.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. Good evening—I should say, good morning.

THE OLD MAN. Anything you like. Good morning it is.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. The Inn is open?

THE OLD MAN. The Inn is always open.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. I shall go in.

THE OLD MAN. That is your privilege.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. I have heard a great deal about the Inn. I want to know more about it. I want to find out all there is to find out about it.

THE OLD MAN. Ah?

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. I have heard that the Inn is run very badly. I have ideas of my own on the subject. I shall see that the Inn is run according to my ideas.

THE OLD MAN. Others have tried.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. I shall succeed. Good morning. [*He enters the Inn.*]

[THE CURTAIN FALLS]

### The Second Scene

*Inside—Morning. The inner side of the portal, open. On either side of it, lofty windows. Through portal and windows one sees a background which is brilliantly illuminated, but which is quite featureless—skyey—neither earth nor trees nor clouds. Only a chair or two serves to show that we are indoors.*

*At one window, peering out intently, is the* Scientist.

*Offstage voices.*

The Poet. What are they all doing?

The Old Man. Trying to find happiness.

The Poet. And how are they doing that?

The Old Man. By running away from it—by running away from it just as hard as they can.

The Poet. Do they ever find happiness?

The Old Man. Sometimes—when it catches up with them. [*He enters at the right.*]

The Scientist. Oh, it's you? I've been waiting for you. Come here. Look.

The Old Man. Look at what?

The Scientist. Through the windows. What do you see?

The Old Man [*with patient indulgence*]. What do you want me to see?

The Scientist. Nothing.

The Old Man. Very well, then; I see nothing.

The Scientist. That's what I claim. Once you cross the threshold there is nothing—nothing at all. Emptiness—blank—Nirvana—oblivion—the candle snuffed out and extinguished. It's scientifically demonstrable. What is there beyond? Distance? Immensity? Infinity? Boundless space? Other Inns like this one? I doubt it.

The Old Man [*nodding sagely*]. You doubt it.

The Scientist. The threshold is the boundary line. Here everything begins—here everything ends. The

boundary line—the jumping-off place—the barrier between the something and the not-something. On one side, life, warmth, light, joy, sadness, fear, envy, struggle, hope, aspiration, triumph, victory, defeat. On the other side, as you said so eloquently, nothing.

THE OLD MAN. Great flow of language—I gotta hand it to you. But what gets me— [*He pauses.*]

THE SCIENTIST [*kindly*]. Go on. Don't be afraid. I'll answer your questions.

THE OLD MAN. What gets me is this: how do you know on which side you are now?

THE SCIENTIST. Eh? What's that?

THE OLD MAN. I was only asking how you knew on which side you was now.

THE SCIENTIST. Don't *you* know?

THE OLD MAN. I ain't sure. I ain't sure at all. You see, when I was a young fellow, there wasn't much I wasn't sure about; but it's changed as I've grown older. As I get along in years the two sides begin to look a lot alike; an' sometimes I wonder if there ain't p'rhaps more than two sides—if there ain't a dozen sides.

THE POET [*entering from the right, watch in hand*]. I beg your pardon.

THE OLD MAN. Yes, sonny?

THE POET. It's curious, but my watch seems to have stopped. Have you any idea of the time?

THE OLD MAN. Tst! Tst! Stopped so early! We can fix that in half a second. What time would you like it to be?

THE POET [*smiling*]. Well, if it's as simple as that, I think I should like it to be morning.

THE OLD MAN. Very well, then, morning it is—morning for you—nine o'clock, if you like.

THE POET [*setting his watch*]. Thank you. [*He goes.*]

THE OLD MAN [*calling after him*]. 'S all right. Don't mention it. You're entirely welcome. [*He turns to the* SCIENTIST.] Morning for him. For us—what?

THE SCIENTIST. Sh! Sh! [*Feebly, but with great dignity, an* OLD LADY *has entered at one side. Slowly, painfully, she moves toward the great door.*] Watch! Now watch! [*The* OLD LADY *reaches the threshold, casts a last lingering look about the room she is leaving, smiles, and goes out. Perhaps she goes to one side; perhaps she goes straight out. But one does not see her pass the windows.*] Watch! [*A pause.*] What did you see?

THE OLD MAN [*who has not looked*]. Nothing.

THE SCIENTIST [*triumphantly*]. Nothing! Nothing at all, exactly as I said. Now some people will tell you that where there's an inside, there must be an outside: that there can't be one without the other. But I say that doesn't follow. I say nothing follows unless I want it to follow. Give me proof, and I'll believe. I'm open to conviction: I'm always open to conviction. But I have yet to find anything quite so reliable as my own intelligence. I can depend upon that.

THE OLD MAN. Because it tells you what you want to hear?

THE SCIENTIST. Because it is trained to reject myth—superstition—falsehood—call it what you will. Because it cuts away everything from the heart of the subject.

THE OLD MAN. P'rhaps it cuts that away too.

THE SCIENTIST. Humph! Not likely! [*He turns back to the window. There enters the* GIRL *of the first scene.*]

THE OLD MAN. Good morning, miss.

THE GIRL. Good morning. It's a lovely morning, isn't it?

THE OLD MAN. Lovely if you say so, miss.

THE GIRL. And if I don't?

THE OLD MAN. Then it ain't. It's morning—morning for you—and it's just as lovely as you think it is.

THE GIRL. But no lovelier?

THE OLD MAN. Nary a bit.

THE GIRL [*laughing*]. That makes it pleasant.

THE OLD MAN. I'm glad to hear that. I'm glad when anything is pleasant for anybody.

THE GIRL [*surveying him curiously*]. It seems to me that I have seen you before.

THE OLD MAN. Yes, miss?

THE GIRL. There's something very familiar about your face. Haven't we met?

THE OLD MAN. I shouldn't be surprised.

THE GIRL. Where was it? [*She pauses.*] And when was it? Was it ten years ago? Was it an eternity ago? Was it—last night?

THE OLD MAN. Perhaps it was all three.

THE GIRL [*slowly*]. Perhaps it was.

THE OLD MAN. If it happened—it happened. That's enough, ain't it?

THE GIRL. I seem to recall speaking to you. It becomes clearer in my mind as I think of it. I seem to recall telling you something—

THE OLD MAN. Yes, miss?

THE GIRL. Though for the life of me I can't remember what I told you.

THE OLD MAN. No? Then it can't have been very important.

THE GIRL [*thoughtfully*]. Perhaps it wasn't. Perhaps it wasn't. And yet—it seems to me that it was very important to me at the time. It seems to me that when I spoke of it, it was more important than anything else in the world—

THE OLD MAN. In the world?

THE GIRL. Or out of it.

THE OLD MAN. Or out of it. [*They look at each other silently. There is a pause. From the right there enters the* LOVER *of the first scene, crossing the room jauntily. The* GIRL *sees him—starts a little, as with a dim memory. He looks at her with absolute lack of recognition. Her start may be interpreted as a bow. He lifts his hat formally,*

*proceeds across the stage, and off at the left. The* Old Man *has watched her intently. Her gaze meets his.*] Well?

The Girl. Well? Did it have something to do with him?—what I am trying to remember? It's like a dream—a dream that I've almost forgotten. Was *he* in it? [*As the* Old Man *does not answer.*] Oh, help me! Help me!

The Old Man [*gently*]. How can I help you?

The Girl. Help me to look into my heart. Help me to find the answer. It's on the very tip of my tongue. But I'm groping in the dark. I can't find it myself.

The Old Man. You've got to find it yourself. That's the way things are done here.

The Girl. But *you* know—and a word from you—

The Old Man. Would spoil everything. [*He pauses.*] What you can't find for yourself isn't worth finding.

The Young Thing [*entering tumultuously*]. Hello, everybody! How's tricks? Say, did you see my fellow around here? Strictly speaking, he isn't my fellow, because we haven't met yet—see? But what's that between friends? The moment I set my lamps on him, I picked him out for yours truly, and that's the same thing.

The Old Man. What's he look like?

The Young Thing. Don't you know him? He's a nice-looking boy, and he dresses something swell.

The Old Man. I think he went that way.

The Young Thing. Then that's the way for me. Much obliged. [*She starts to go.*]

The Girl. Wait a minute. How do you know he's your "fellow"?

The Young Thing [*aggressively*]. I seen him first, didn't I? Finding's keepings. [*She goes, left.*]

The Old Man [*to the* Girl]. Well?

The Girl. Well?

The Old Man [*to the* Scientist]. What do you think about it?

The Scientist. I don't.

The Old Man. What do you mean?

THE SCIENTIST. I'm not in the least interested. To me, it's highly unimportant. [*He goes, right.*]

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*who has been standing at the right for the last minute*]. I say it's not unimportant. [*He turns and calls after the* SCIENTIST.] I say it's anything but unimportant. I say it's very important—very important indeed. [*He goes to the* GIRL.] I take it for granted that you don't approve.

THE GIRL. Why not?

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. She openly admitted that they hadn't been introduced to each other. You heard that, didn't you?

THE GIRL. Yes.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. Well, that's all wrong. It won't do at all. I shall make a law providing for just such cases. For the first infraction [*he rubs his hands with a happy smile*] there will be a penalty of fine *or* imprisonment; for the second infraction, fine *and* imprisonment; for the third—if there should be a third—

THE OLD MAN. Boil 'em in oil.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. I say, that's not a bad idea! You don't mind if I make a note of it?

THE OLD MAN. Go right ahead.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*opening a large notebook*]. Place. . . . [*he writes*] Date . . . [*he writes*]. Time . . . what is the hour?

THE OLD MAN. Noon—high noon. Twelve o'clock—for you. [*Abruptly the lighting changes.*]

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*writing*]. Twelve o'clock. [*From the left the* LOVER *and the* YOUNG THING *enter together, arms twined about each other. They cross slowly to the right.*]

THE LOVER. It's fate—I know it can be nothing else. It's fate, drawing us together from the ends of the world. The moment I first saw you, I felt a thrill; I felt something electric. I knew that you and I had been intended for each other since the world began. There is something

about you—something which I can't describe—something which I can only feel; something which tells me that you were made for me.

THE YOUNG THING [*with a friendly nod to the others*]. Hasn't he got the grandest line of talk?

THE LOVER. It's not often like that; at least, so I've been told. Often a man spends his whole life looking for the one woman who is meant for him—spends his life searching to the ends of the earth, when she may be just around the corner—and doesn't find her. How tragic that must be! How tragic! Two lives blasted! But luck—Providence—call it what you will—is on my side, and I have found—you!

THE YOUNG THING [*as he pauses ecstatically*]. Go on, cutie.

THE LOVER. To be understood: that, after all, is the greatest thing in life, and I feel that you—only you—understand me. We are kindred spirits, drawn to each other. I know it. I am sure of it. I feel that you divine my thoughts before I speak them—even before I think them; that you know what I want to say before I know it myself; that you read my mind as if it were a printed book. Am I right?

THE YOUNG THING. Betcha life, kid.

THE LOVER. Will you marry me?

THE YOUNG THING. Surest thing you know! [*They pass out of sight at the right. The others have watched with different expressions. The* OLD MAN, *as always, is gently tolerant. The* GIRL *does not know whether to be surprised, amused—or pitiful. The* SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL, *openly hostile, has been making copious notes.*]

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. A disgraceful exhibition, I call it; a disgraceful exhibition. It doesn't fit in at all with my ideas. It must not be tolerated.

THE GIRL [*gently*]. They're not well suited to one another.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. What has that to do with it? I am concerned with the fundamentals.

THE OLD MAN. And what are the fundamentals?

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. *I* know what they are. That is sufficient. I settled them for myself long ago. I shall make a second law. It will go right to the bottom of things: no mincing matters, no shilly-shallying, no temporizing with conditions for me. For the first offense, imprisonment without hard labor; for the second, imprisonment *with* hard labor; for the third—if there should be a third—

THE OLD MAN. Hard labor without imprisonment.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. These matters are too serious to be discussed in jest. [*He turns to the* GIRL.] Come with me.

THE GIRL. What for?

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. Evidence; I will gather evidence. I will learn all there is to know about the subject. That will occupy a few minutes. Then I will deal with it —uncompromisingly.

THE GIRL. Don't be too hard on him. A man makes mistakes.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. *I* never make them. [*They go out at the right. The* OLD MAN *lights his pipe; puffs it. There enters the* POET.]

THE OLD MAN. Well, what are you after? If you want to know what time it is, it's afternoon—two o'clock—for you. [*The lighting changes abruptly.*]

THE POET [*referring to his watch*]. Two o'clock: quite correct. My watch hasn't stopped again. I know the time. But that's not why I came here. I came here to think. In there there's too much hustle and bustle. This is the one place where I can get away from everything.

THE OLD MAN. And what do you want to think about?

THE POET. Beautiful things. There *are* beautiful things in the Inn, aren't there?

THE OLD MAN. I have always thought so.

THE POET. I have tried to find them. When I do find them I shall describe them in immortal verse. [*Parenthetically.*] You will pardon me for referring to my efforts so frankly? To say less would be false modesty.

THE OLD MAN. What have you written?

THE POET [*with an engaging smile*]. Nothing yet.

THE OLD MAN. Why not?

THE POET. I have failed to find a subject worthy of my pen. If there are beautiful things here, where are they?

THE OLD MAN. Would you know them if you saw them?

THE POET. I have found nothing but struggle—strife—dreams that don't come true—hopes that are never realized—

THE OLD MAN. And you found nothing beautiful there?

THE POET. I found—discontent.

THE OLD MAN. It's always that way at an Inn. Kick at the service; swear at the food; make fun of the rooms; complain about the other guests; criticize the management. An' then, when you go, recommend it to your friends—if you've got any—an' tell them how much you've enjoyed it. Tell them—tell them—you'd come back if you could.

THE POET. I'm not so sure of that.

THE OLD MAN. Spend your time finding out—nothing! Look out—when you should be looking in! But look in once in a while to tell your neighbors how *you* think they ought to live their lives. Make laws, and when they don't work, make more laws. And then, if you're not happy yourself, if you don't find anything beautiful in the Inn, blame the rest of creation—not your own mistakes—for it! [*From the right enters the* YOUNG THING, *followed at varying distances by the* LOVER *and the* SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. *She is audible before she is visible.*]

THE YOUNG THING. Cut it out, I tell you! Cut it out! [*She turns to the others.*] Say, if you fellows know how to do it, call him off! Call him off, I tell you!

THE OLD MAN. What's the matter?

THE YOUNG THING. A little of him goes a long ways,

that's what's the matter. I don't mind listening to him—he's got the gift of gab, that fellow. I don't mind holding hands with him—I've got an affectionate disposition, see? But when I took him for richer or poorer, better or worse, till death do us part, I didn't know what I was letting myself in for. I know now, and I'm not keen about it—not one little bit.

THE LOVER. Sweetheart!

THE YOUNG THING. Do you know what my life's like with him? Do you want me to tell you about it? All right, here goes. Can you see him tending the furnace? Not much! He's one of them romantic guys that don't like to get his hands dirty. Can you see him walking the floor nights—about a year from now—with the baby? Not if he can make me do it! He's got to sleep, or he won't be able to think up pretty things to say to me. Can you see him drying the dishes after I wash 'em? Not on your tintype! He's one of them ornamental fellows—fine to go out walking with, but no more useful inside the house than a moth-eaten umbrella! Now, what I'm going to find myself is a young husky. He don't have to have brains if he's got the sense to do what I tell him. He don't have to look like much if he forks over his pay envelope at the end of every week. And I don't care if he can't talk like a professor if he knows enough to put his arm around me and give me a good squeeze once in a while.

THE LOVER. Sweetheart!

THE YOUNG THING. "Sweetheart!" That's the trouble with him! He means it. It isn't kidding: it's the real thing. He's stuck on me—the poor nut—so he's married me, and he thinks I'm going to work for him the rest of my life! [*She turns on him.*] Why couldn't you have left well enough alone? I'd have gone on being friends—nothing more than friends—see? That would have been enough—plenty! You had to spoil it all. [*She softens.*] There's a girl out there who wants you. She'd like to have you. I'm going to make her a present of you. You're hers—

hers on a silver platter with watercress around it. But when it comes to yours truly, you can count me out! I resign. [*She smiles: takes him by the arm.*] This way, cutie. [*She pilots him out, right.*]

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*who has not missed a word*]. Outrageous! Simply outrageous!

THE OLD MAN. Why?

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. People must get along. People must not quarrel. I object.

THE POET. So do I. Quarreling is not beautiful.

THE OLD MAN. They're a pretty poor team. They never should have hitched up together in the first place.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. What has that to do with the welfare of the community? How, if you please, is that related to the doctrine of the highest good? The law is no respecter of persons. Scandals like this cannot—must not—continue. It's out of the question. Why, what would society come to if we closed our eyes to this?

THE OLD MAN. If they stay married, they'll lead a cat-and-dog life.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. What of that? Many of the best people do.

THE OLD MAN. They'll be unhappy.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. Not if I give the matter my personal attention. I shall settle it in the simplest of all ways. I shall make a law requiring everybody to be happy. I shall make a law forbidding people to be unhappy.

THE POET. That sounds like a very good idea.

THE OLD MAN. Humph! Strikes me you've made a good many laws.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*proudly*]. Hundreds of them!

THE OLD MAN. What's happened to them? Where are they now?

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. They have been flouted. They have been violated. They have been ignored. But I shall remedy that. There is nothing wrong with the Inn that cannot be made right with a few well-phrased statutes;

nothing out of joint that cannot be put into joint by half a dozen pages of fine print. What we need is law—more law—and still more law. The more laws, the more civilization; the more civilization, the more intelligence; the more intelligence, the more laws. A thought has occurred to me—a thought so absurdly simple that I wonder why it hasn't occurred to somebody long ago: I shall enact a new law compelling everybody to obey all old laws! As simple as that! [*He opens his notebook.*] The place . . . [*he writes*]. The date [*he writes*]. The time . . .

THE OLD MAN. Evening. Six o'clock—for you. [*The lights change suddenly.*]

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*writing*]. Six o'clock.

THE OLD MAN. And you—what do you think about it? [*He turns to the* POET.]

THE POET. I'm still waiting.

THE OLD MAN. Waiting—for what?

THE POET. For something beautiful; for something so beautiful that I may immortalize it in verse.

THE OLD MAN. An' you ain't found it yet? In the scrap that's going on here every minute; in the fight—the fight for happiness—you can't find something you can call beautiful?

THE POET. How absurd! I begin to think that I shall never find it. [*There enter the* GIRL *and the* LOVER.]

THE LOVER. It's fate—I know it can be nothing else. It's fate, drawing us together from the ends of the world. The moment I first saw you, I felt a thrill; I felt something electric. I knew that you and I had been intended for each other since the world began. There is something about you—something which I can't describe—something which I can only feel; something that tells me that you were made for me.

THE GIRL [*smiling*]. One makes mistakes, my dear; but if they aren't bad mistakes, they can be mended; and sometimes bad mistakes can be mended too. [*She turns to the* OLD MAN.] He thinks he knows—

THE LOVER [*interrupting*]. I *know* I know.

THE GIRL [*indulgently*]. Of course you do, dear. [*She turns back to the* OLD MAN.] But I, I have remembered. I know what it was I said to you—ages ago. I am sure. [*The* OLD MAN *smiles.*] We have found each other. There is much that has come between—there is much that has come before—but it doesn't matter. We found each other in the end.

THE OLD MAN. There's something for you! [*He nudges the* POET.]

THE POET. But that's not beautiful! That's a miserable, patched-up happiness! [*He turns to the* GIRL.] If he had come to you in the beginning, if, from the very first, you two had drifted into each other's arms, that would have been lovely. It would have been romantic. It would have been a fit theme for me to write about. But to accept him when somebody else discards him—

THE OLD MAN. That's life.

THE POET. It's a wretched compromise.

THE OLD MAN. It's life.

THE POET. To take him when he himself isn't sure: that is unworthy. There is only one thing you can do: turn your back on him. Anything else would be beneath your dignity.

THE GIRL. Happiness—no matter how it comes—no matter how late it comes—isn't beneath my dignity.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*appealing to the* LOVER]. You must not do this thing. You have chosen. You must stick to your choice.

THE LOVER. I don't want to.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. The law commands.

THE LOVER. I made a mistake.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. How do you know that you are not making another now? Wait! Do nothing rash until I come back! Wait! [*He hurries off at the right.*]

THE POET [*to the* GIRL]. Give him up! Renounce him! Sacrifice yourself! Your renunciation will be splendid.

THE GIRL. I would rather be happy than splendid.

THE POET. Refuse him! Give him to the woman who claimed him first! Send him back to her! Don't lower yourself by taking him after she rejected him! Where is your pride?

THE GIRL. I would rather be happy than proud.

THE POET. Think! Just think! Make a beautiful surrender! Be unhappy if you must; mourn what might have been the rest of your life, but I, I will write about you! In my undying lines your story will go thundering down the ages! Centuries after you are buried, people will murmur your name!

THE GIRL. What is to happen after I am gone doesn't interest me greatly. The present is mine. And happiness is more important than anything else.

THE POET. To you, perhaps; but to me—

THE OLD MAN [*interrupting*]. Yes; what is it to you? [*The* SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL *reënters with the* YOUNG THING.]

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. I have convinced her. I have made her see the light. I have shown her that her personal inclination must give way in the face of lofty ideals—my ideals. She is ready to do her duty.

THE OLD MAN [*gently, to the* YOUNG THING]. Is that so?

THE YOUNG THING [*brokenly*]. I don't want to! Oh, I don't want to! But I guess he knows what he's talking about. I mean well, you see. I'm not bad. I don't want to do anything wrong.

THE POET. Bravo! I applaud your attitude!

THE YOUNG THING. There's lots of things I don't understand—oh, I know where I get off—and I s'pose this is one of 'em. I'm not a highbrow, I guess. But I do know I shouldn't have married him! [*She weeps.*] I shouldn't have married him! He's not the man for me. I should have married somebody different—lots different. I should have had a chance to be—well, to be myself. That wasn't asking such an awful lot. That wouldn't have hurt anybody; I wouldn't have done any harm. And it's not too

late now. But what am I going to do when he [*and she indicates the* SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL] tells me just what's what?

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. You will know that you have done a fine thing. You will have set a worthy example. You will have an easy conscience.

THE YOUNG THING. An easy conscience? I've always had one so far. A lot of good it's going to do me from now on! But I guess you're right. [*She crosses pathetically to the* LOVER.] For better or worse—come on, cutie. I'll make another stab at it if you will.

THE GIRL. You would take him from me?

THE YOUNG THING. He says I got to. Honest, I don't want to.

THE GIRL. I want to keep him.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. You can't. The law is on her side.

THE POET. You can't. It wouldn't be beautiful.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. You must learn to subordinate your own wishes. You must learn—if necessary—to suffer.

THE GIRL. To suffer? To suffer? I will learn that soon enough. I have learnt something about it already. A wretched compromise—a miserable, patched-up happiness—that is all I am to have out of life. It is not much. I think what might have been. I know what can never be—and I, I suffer. Every woman has a right to her romance. I have been cheated out of mine. But I have gathered up its shreds, I have collected its particles, to build afresh in the hope that some day I may have my romance—miserable, wretched, patched-up that it is—but *my* romance to treasure in my memory.

THE LOVER [*feeling that it is incumbent upon him to say something*]. We are a pair of lovers.

THE GIRL [*looking at him sadly; shaking her head*]. A pair of lovers? Not we. Say rather a woman who has found the man whom she must mother; a man who has found the woman who needs him so much that she will

suffer for him; two human beings—weak, frail, helpless—destined, perhaps, to make each other unhappy, but destined too, from the very beginning, for each other's arms.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. Nevertheless, you must learn.

THE GIRL. Learn what?

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*it is his moment of triumph*]. You must learn that the most beautiful words in any language are these: "Thou shalt not!" [*There is a tense pause.*]

THE GIRL [*turning fiercely to the* OLD MAN]. And you—what do you say about it?

THE OLD MAN. I ain't been doing any saying at all. I've been thinking.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*loftily*]. Thinking? With what result?

THE OLD MAN. Thinking that it ain't up to me to say nothing. The time for saying things is past. It's up to me to do something. [*Abruptly the lights change. It is dim now within the Inn. Outside a cold, blue moonlight beckons. To the* SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL.] Night—night for you. Come with me! Come!

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL. Where to?

THE SCIENTIST [*rushing in; taking his stand at one of the windows*]. Watch! Now watch!

THE OLD MAN. Come! You come! [*Backwards he moves towards the threshold. As if hypnotized, the* SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL *follows him.*]

THE SCIENTIST. Now watch! Watch!

THE OLD MAN [*crossing the threshold*]. Come! Come!

[THE CURTAIN FALLS]

## THE THIRD SCENE

*Outside—There is no intermission between the second and third scenes. The curtain rises immediately. Night. A great portal. Over it, a hanging lantern. On either*

*side of it, lofty windows. The scene is but dimly lighted. Discernible at one window is the* SCIENTIST; *at the other the* POET. *The* OLD MAN *crosses the threshold, followed by the* SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL.

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*terrified*]. Where—where have you taken me?

THE OLD MAN. Sonny, I don't know myself. I only know that in there, you're not needed. Let them work out their lives for themselves. Let them fight for their happiness. Maybe—maybe that way it'll catch up with them.

THE SCIENTIST [*at his window*]. What do you see?

THE POET. Nothing.

THE SCIENTIST. That's what I claim! Once you cross the threshold, there is—

THE POET [*interrupting*]. Stop! Stop! I see something! I don't know what it is, but I see something!

THE SCIENTIST. Impossible. [*He crosses to the* POET'S *window.*]

THE SERIOUS INDIVIDUAL [*indicating the* POET]. Why didn't you take him too?

THE OLD MAN. Because there's hope for him. Did you hear what he just said? [*At the window vacated by the* SCIENTIST, *the* GIRL, *the* YOUNG THING, *and the* LOVER *become visible. They peer out intently.*]

THE OLD MAN [*turning to them; raising his arms as if in benediction*]. If it were in my power, it would be morning —morning for you! [*The lighting outside the Inn does not change, but a beautiful, golden illumination gradually suffuses its interior, overflows through portal and windows, stretches its beams far into the outer darkness. With profound exaltation.*] Ah!

[THE CURTAIN FALLS]